The Bull I' th' Thorn

By

PAUL CUSHING.

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THE BULL I' TH' THORN

THE BULL I' TH' THORN

A ROMANCE

BY

PAUL CUSHING

AUTHOR OF 'THE BLACKSMITH OF VOE,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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PART II.

THE BULL I' TH' THORN.

CHAPTER I.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

On board the barque Guenilda, twelve days out from the Coast of Mexico.

Ding, dong, dell! Ding, dong, dell! Ding, dong, dell! How plainly do I hear the bells, the dear old bells of Poloc, ringing on this Christmas morning, though they be a good thousand leagues from this my cabin! And though my vision be none of the sharpest, I can see tripping across Muskerry Park, on her way to church, the graceful figure of

the sweetest girl on earth. Oh, Guenilda mine, how my heart aches for a sight of you, for a touch of you! With fair winds, and that blessed gift of heaven, Good Luck, in eight weeks or so we shall make the English Channel. And then—ah me! what then? Shall I find her alive or dead? If she yet lives, she is mine. I know that from of old the tradition hath run, that women are fickle and false. And that arch-rogue, Crump, when he had me in his power among the mountains, told me that he had heard from England that Guenilda Muskerry was already married and a mother. My Guen married and I not her husband! My Guen with a baby and I not its father! By the same token Master Crump was most certainly a liar, and so I told him to his face, though my life was just then at his mercy. No,—if she is yet alive, she is mine; and if she be dead, she died true to her loyalty and

love. And sometimes my heart grows sick and faint at the thought, that peradventure she is dead. Else why this dreadful silence, absolute and unbroken?

Every year, I have sent to her two letters at regular intervals of six months, the despatch of which hath sometimes been a matter of no small difficulty and danger—as I reckon it now from memory, it has cost the lives of five men, and the wounding and maiming of eleven more, which is truly a heavy price for postage. Some of my letters may very well have miscarried, but not all. Wherefore ariseth the question of her silence. The more I think of it the more it seems to be likely, that the true answer to the question lieth in the skilful interception of all my writings. Only, in that case, my poor sweetheart must have watched and waited in vain for tidings of her beloved, and, like him, have felt the sharp tooth of

disappointment, if not the numbing sting of despair. Not that her heart was weak, or her courage of poor temper, but seven years is a long time, when one counteth every day and every hour thereof. Yet have I no other hope concerning her, and this, even this, is pleasantness itself compared with the dread thought of her death. For if she be in truth dead, O God, for what end or purpose am I alive? What good will be to me the great and strange wealth, that now lies stored in the hold of this brave barque? My father is without doubt mentally dead, dead to the past, dead to the honour and glory, the shame and misery, of the name of Poloc.

The mother will give a warm welcome to my dollars, if not to me; and she is welcome to them. But—have I lived for this? Is it worth while? If my darling be really dead, the rats are welcome to my treasures. I can

do no building again of the shattered house of my fathers. I will return again to Mexico, rally some of my old and faithful comrades-in-arms, strike another blow for liberty, and die as becomes the name and fame of *El Leon de Mejico.*

I begin to think that I am surely suffering from a fit of the blues: small wonder is it, seeing that I am cooped up in this small ship, with no prospect of relief for eight long weeks at the shortest. I have lived before now for as many months, in the woods and on the mountains, alone, without where to lay my head in safety, with no food but nuts and berries, hunted to and fro, like a wild partridge, by the royal troops. Yet I never once thought of dying as became my name and fame. The scent was hot, and the hunt was hard, but I felt game, and never despaired. The trees knew me, and the rocks, and the springs, and the birds and insects

and little creeping things; they gave me companionship, sympathy, and delightfully cool sanity. Which things are only found in the rough among men, and, God wots, are not found at all among fishes, nor on the great seas, nor in ships big or little. Whereof the end is this: to escape the blues, and kill time, and perhaps to please my Guenilda with a plain unvarnished tale of some of my adventures, and more particularly the manner in which I came by my treasures, I, Ralph Poloc, only son of Sir Ralph Poloc, of Poloc, Baronet, and otherwise known as El General Rodolfo Polocino, and still better known as *El Leon de Mejico*, will write a journal by the aid of heaven and the Blessed Saints. Which aid I shall sorely need, as my instinct tells me.

I can handle a musket, a sword, or a lance. I can form men in battle array. I can head a squadron of cavalry, and, at the

sound of the bugle, I can show my men the way to victory at full gallop. Also, not to forget the past, I can chop wood, feed pigs, milk a cow, hold a plough, and drive a mule. But in the art, the subtile art of the pen, I am a novice. 'Tis true, none will see what is writ save my Guenilda; but were it the other way about, I should be happier, seeing that all the world is nobody compared with her. For her sake, I would have the words and thoughts full of the sacred melody of the perfect art. Oh, Guenilda mine, I would have the great round world, and all that is thereon, perfect for thy sake!

CHAPTER II.

THE CAMP OF MORELOS.

When I fled from the courtyard of Muskerry Hall, I carried with me the sensations of a murderer. Archibald Crump had indeed showed himself to be my enemy; he had betrayed me shamefully, and to injury he had added insult. But he had hardly merited death at my hands, and I made no doubt that I had shot him dead. I heard him cry out; I saw him throw up his arms, stagger, and fall. A good sound thrashing he did richly deserve; but I was not egotist enough to feel or think that, in sinning against me, he had forfeited his right to life.

Again, the scales had fallen from my eyes, and I saw clearly that he had wrought the work of an unsuccessful rival. Now, that any man, being free to love a girl honestly, should come in contact with my Guenilda and not fall in love with her—this seemed to me a strange and unnatural thing to suppose. And whoso fell in love with her, and found not his love returned, but given to another mortal man of ordinary clay—he might well feel that nothing, short of murder, was too sharp a punishment to inflict on the thief, who had stolen from him the sweetest girl alive. So thinking, I fashioned a shield of defence for the traitor, and at the same time left my own breast exposed and defenceless.

I felt myself a murderer, and, but for the shame and confusion of face that would have befallen my Guenilda, I should twenty times over have delivered myself up to just

punishment. One's best motives, I would here observe, are not always sure guides to action: I have lived to be thankful that I did not give myself up to justice. For though, in truth, they would not have hanged me — Crump being not dead, nor yet very seriously wounded—they would, questionless, have inflicted some penalty upon me. And though it had been no more than the cutting off of one single hair of my head, it would have been too much favour shown to that treacherous and not over-brave rogue, Archibald Crump. Pray heaven, I may never again set eyes on him! Many is the time he has sought my life, and always by wile and stratagem. Where he is now I know not, but this I know, that where he is, there is a—*mosca muerta*, a mean scamp.

I will tarry no longer with him, but get on with my narrative. I made my way

direct to London, and, falling in with the mate of a ship about to sail for Philadelphia, he brought me to the master, who consented to let me work my passage out, though he doubted that I should ever earn my victual. Nevertheless, on our arrival out, he begged me to ship with him on the return voyage, saying that he would give me the rating of an able-bodied seaman. When I asked him if I had earned my victual, he looked hard at me, smiled a bit, and said in his Scotch way—

"Eh, mon, ye've done so; an' for a proof o' the same, I will mak' ye a present o' this."

He handed me a five-dollar bill, which I took, knowing that I had earned it.

After I had been in the States some little time, it came to my knowledge that a revolution had broken out in Mexico. At that time I knew about as much of Mexico

as I did of the moon. Yet what a land of beauty, of romance, of mystery, and of tragedy it was and is! Little did I think at that time what destiny had in store for me. Little did I dream that I should live to be known, and feared, and loved as THE LION OF MEXICO. It was enough for me, at that time, to know that I was within reach of a land where there was fighting going on; for I had become very home-sick and restless, and longed for some excitement to take me out of myself.

Without any delay I started South, making for New Orleans, partly by land and partly by water. On the way thither, by reading of several books, and by much talking with many people, I picked up considerable information concerning the land and people of Mexico. My astonishment was great, I remember, when I found that the country belonged to Spain, and was governed by

Spaniards. With this knowledge came the first touch of prejudice. Till then, knowing not who were the fighters, or what they were fighting about, it had remained with me an entirely open question which side I should take. My first and great and only object was to fight: whom I should fight would depend upon circumstances. A state of mind, this, distinguished perhaps for its simplicity, but one methinks that Englishmen have not been strangers to, in many parts of the globe.

My schooling was never so great that I could ever put my finger on any one piece of knowledge, or ignorance, and say—That learnt I at school. By the same token, I cannot affirm that I was taught it at school—indeed, I incline to the opinion that it was the general belief, not only in the parish of Poloc but in many other parishes besides, namely, that Spain knew no more how to

govern subject races than she did to make Yorkshire pudding. From which steady conviction on my part, it sprang that no sooner did I learn that it was Spain against Anybody, than straightway I decided to back Anybody. This settled the question of sides, and was no small comfort to me, as it left my mind free to think about more important matters.

The first news I learned at New Orleans was that Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, together with Allende, Aldama, and Abasolo, who were reported the very souls of the revolution, had been captured when setting out to the United States to secure arms and officers; and that the revolutionary movement was at an end. This was, indeed, bad tidings, and sorely perplexed me. To remain where I was seemed useless, and to return on my tracks worse than useless. There seemed nothing for it but to push on to Mexico, and this I did.

What were my first impressions of the country, I scarcely remember, inasmuch as they have nearly all been either obliterated, or modified, by subsequent experience. But this I will say with full knowledge, that no land on earth has been more favoured by heaven, and afflicted by man, than has Mexico. Glorious scenery, beautiful climates, inexhaustible mineral wealth, mountains of gold and silver, flowers and fruits of every kind, a native population naturally patient, docile, and industrious. This is nature's work. While man's work has been, for the last three hundred years, one of bad government, oppression, cruelty, rapacity, and ignorance. It seems to me like a grim tragedy in a garden of roses.

I had not been in Mexico a week ere I heard of the bitter and contemptuous saying of the Oidor Bataller, that "while a Manchego mule or a Castilian cobbler remained in the peninsula, he had a right to

govern the Americans." I laughed—as who would not?—at the big words of a fool. But I have since learned that Oidor Bataller was no fool, only a blunt cynic. For centuries, the colonial policy of Spain has been based upon his sentiment. I was not long in finding out, that the revolutionary movement had not been ended by the capture of the Cura Hidalgo and his companions. With their execution, which followed in the course of a few months, the curtain did but fall upon the first scene of a bloody and heroic drama, of which the end is not even yet in sight.

Already the country began to swarm with guerilla chiefs, and men were soon to become familiar with the names and exploits of Rayon, Muniz, Navarrete, Osorno, Guerrero, Teran, the cura Matamoros, the three Galeaños, José, Antonio, and Ermenegildo, the three Bravos, Miguel, Nicolas, and Leon-

ardo, and José Maria Fernandez, afterwards known as General Guadalupe Victoria. Just then, however, men's eyes were fixed on Don José Maria Morelos, cura of Nucupetaro, chief lieutenant of Hidalgo, who had now become the head and front of the insurrection. To his standard had flocked numerous Creoles of distinction, and some deserters from the European royalist troops. The bulk of his army of one thousand men was composed of negroes, whom he had raised in the *Tierra Caliente* along the Pacific coast. With this most unpromising material, which he had drilled and disciplined into a good fighting-force, he faced the royal troops again and again, and rendered so good an account of himself, that the Spaniards feared him and his thousand negroes more than they had Hidalgo, with his wild horde of a hundred thousand Indians.

I had been in the city of Mexico ten days, when I suddenly made up my mind to set out to join Morelos, who was somewhere in the district of Acapulco. I was minded to do so, by the simple act of opening my purse and counting my money, which, I found to my surprise, had somehow shrunk to the pitiable dimensions of one peso, or silver dollar, and three medios, of which it took no fewer than sixteen to make one peso. My purse and its contents were worth one English crown-piece, neither more nor less.

All things considered, I suppose I ought to have felt very downcast and wretched, for I was truly in a sad plight. I felt that it was my duty so to feel, seeing that I was an English gentleman of honourable descent, and no mere vagabond. And I did seriously try to feel miserable, but with very poor success. A spring of

gladness seemed to bubble up within me; my heart was light, and once or twice I so far forgot myself as to laugh right out. On asking myself the cause of this strange insensibility to suffering, I could obtain no other answer than "Morelos! Morelos!" set to a kind of chant. "Since thou art Morelos - mad, to Morelos thou shalt go," I answered, half angry with myself. And to Morelos I went.

On the way I learned to do two things that were of great assistance to me — to make myself understood in Spanish, and to beg with the demure audacity of a friar. As I could command no *diligencia*, *caballo*, or *mulo*, needs must that I should foot it. The Acapulco road was nothing but a mere trail—*buen camino de paxaros*—a good road for birds. Bad as it was, I soon had to leave it for worse, seeing that it was infested with bandits, and, what was more objectionable,

with the royal troops. To avoid these, I travelled mostly by night and early morning, lying *perdu* most of the day. It was a curious journey, and led me over a wide stretch of *mal pais*, dreary and forbidding; through sugar plantations, and fields of grain, and dark woods; across unbridged rivers and swollen rushing streams, and into deep ravines and gloomy gorges.

I passed through numerous villages formed of adobe huts, in most of which I was treated with humanity, in some with true hospitality, and in two I was insulted, starved, and imprisoned. Thus I obtained a peculiar view of the country and the people. It was a ground view. I saw them from the bottom upwards. The bird flies overhead, and perches on the tall trees. Happy bird! The field-mouse scutters along the small furrows of the ground, and through the long grasses, seeking a retreat among dead

logs and dry leaves. Happy mouse!—why not? I was not bird, but mouse; and perhaps, from my weed-hidden cranny in the side of a ditch, I got as true a view of men and manners as the flitting bird among the branches. I was neither *reo* nor *lepero*—criminal nor vagabond, yet my habits of life were practically theirs, and my outlook much the same. And though perhaps I ought not to say it, I grew a gland of sympathy for the homeless wanderer, and the outlaw, which makes an active secretion to this hour.

It took me two months to reach the camp of Morelos, about twenty leagues from Acapulco. It was dusk one evening, when I found myself on the edge of a small wood, beyond which was the camp of the Patriots. Suddenly, out from the wood sprang an enormous Pinto, or spotted Indian; his uniform consisted of a small

napkin about his loins, and he carried a musket on his naked shoulder.

"*Quien anda?*" he cried, covering me with his gun.

"*Amigo*," I answered, wondering if the savage knew that, if he happened to pull the trigger, the gun would go off.

"*Que gente?*"

"*Tropas de Patrioticos*," I replied, boldly.

"*Bien esta, señor*," responded the Pinto, lowering his weapon; and while he shook me by the hand, and gently patted me over the shoulder on the back, this well-bred, if not well-dressed, gentleman on guard poured into my ear a good dozen expressions of welcome, among which I remember was the famous polite phrase of hospitality, *á la disposicion de Usted.*

I thought the savage took me for some great personage, and so I put on a little more dignity in my bearing, which was the

more difficult to do seeing that I was almost barefooted and in rags. My conductor led me through the wood, which swarmed with soldiers, and through the camp to the tent of Morelos. This was guarded by some dozen negroes, great lusty fierce-looking fellows, who seemed quite capable of both killing and eating any number of enemies. After a few minutes' delay, I was invited to enter the tent, which I did, and found myself in the presence of the renowned Don José Maria Morelos. He was dressed in the uniform of a general, with a *sarape* thrown gracefully over his left shoulder, and a red bandit-looking handkerchief round his head.

Of medium height and slender frame, Morelos had a long thin visage, with large dark eyes, high cheek-bones, a straight nose, and a firm well-cut mouth. It was an intellectual and humane face; and while

the mouth and chin accounted for the comparatively fine discipline of his army, the tender, half-melancholy expression of his eyes suggested the secret of the personal devotion he inspired among his followers. Somewhat reserved in manner, he was affable in speech, and his smile was passing winsome. He asked me who I was, whence I came, and the wherefore of my coming, together with many other questions, all of which I answered fully and frankly, having nothing on my mind that I wanted to conceal. When I had finished, he extended his hand to me, and, with that fascinating smile of his, said simply, "*Amigo mio.*" That same day, I was appointed a lieutenant in the army of Mexican Patriots.

CHAPTER III.

A BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY.

PROUD of my new dignity was I, as a child of a new toy. My knowledge of the military art consisted solely of my ability to hold a gun, and aim straight. I could shoot a rabbit dead, ran he ever so quick; and what was good enough for an English rabbit was good enough for a Spanish soldier. All I knew of drill was to keep my face to the enemy, and my tactics were summed up in going for the enemy when I saw him. And in lieu of more technical knowledge, this stood me in good stead more than once.

I had come out to fight, and of fighting I

soon had a stomachful. There was continual skirmishing going on between us and the royalists, who hampered us on every side. About once a-week they got up courage to try conclusions with us, when some pretty sharp actions were fought, in which, as a rule, we came not off second best. In such a school, he must be a dull scholar who learns not his lessons thoroughly. In four months I had learned how to handle my men properly; I had brought them in touch with the enemy a score of times; I had captured some Spanish colours on the field, and in a kind of hand-to-hand combat I had slain a Spanish general. For which services Morelos made me a colonel. Meanwhile we were slowly making our way northwards, dreaming dimly and fearfully of the day when we should, perhaps, be able to march on the city of Mexico itself.

By January 1812, Morelos had pushed

forward his advanced-guard, under Bravo, to Calco, with outposts resting on San Augustino de las Cuevas, within four leagues of the capital. Morelos, with the main part of the army, lay at Cuautla Amilpas, twenty-four leagues from Mexico. General Calleja, who had defeated Hidalgo, was ordered by the Virey Venegas to attack Morelos, who determined to make a stand at Cuautla. The valley of Cuautla, though it lies around the southern spurs of Popocatepetl, is in the *Tierra Caliente*, and is hemmed in from the cold winds from the table-lands above, by the northern barrier of mountains.

When first I beheld it, I thought that I had never seen a prettier picture than was set forth by this little valley, whose foliage is never blighted by frost. The tender green of the young sugar-cane looked like a covering of richest velvet, embroidered with the silver thread of many streams. There were stately

haciendas, with white walls and towers, dating from the Conquest; groves of oranges, lemons, pine-apples, limes, bananas, and a score of native tropical fruits whose names I knew not, interspersed with the hanging foliage of palms and plantains. And over all this tropical splendour there towered the solitary snow-peak of Popocatepetl.

The little town of Cuautla Amilpas, containing a few thousand inhabitants, was a veritable garden embowered in foliage. Alas! it is now little better than a waste land. It was an entirely open town—the houses, built of *tepetate*, being low, and the streets very wide. By the rules of war, its defence was impracticable; but the Padre Morelos knew that the eyes of all Mexico were upon him, and therefore he determined not to retreat a step, but to fight where he was—little dreaming, however, that the assault would be converted into a

desperate siege; but so it was, as I shall presently relate.

On the morning of February 18th, the advance-guard of the enemy was reported to be within a couple of leagues of Cuautla. Morelos immediately set out to reconnoitre, attended by a small body of officers, of which I was one, and about one hundred and fifty men. We marched a league and a half without seeing any sign of the enemy, and were upon the point of returning, when of a sudden a mounted soldier crested a small hill a little to our left. He halted for a few moments, the figure of himself and horse clean cut against the sky; then he kissed his hand to us ironically, and rode back at a gallop. A few hundred yards ahead of us was a small but dense growth of palms, aloes, and forest-trees, which had claimed our attention just as the trooper showed himself. It was now evident, however, that

the enemy was on the other side of the hill, towards which we made with all speed.

We had covered about half the distance, when, happening to glance back over my right shoulder, I saw a sight that made me start.

"*Por Dios, mira!* For God's sake, look!" I cried, facing round.

There below us was a body of the royalist troops, two hundred strong, streaming out of the little plantation like bees from a hive, and forming quickly into line. They were Spanish veterans every man of them, and had held their own when pitted against the best troops in Europe. When they saw that we had discovered them, they set up a loud derisive shout, as well they might. We were trapped neatly. I looked at Morelos, and his eyes were full of fire, and his face was exceeding dark. He signalled, and I drew near to him.

"*Amigo mio,* what think you—can they

face them?" he said, in a low voice, and his eyes wandered over his black soldiers almost pathetically.

"They have done, General, before now," I answered.

"Creoles, yes, but not Spanish veterans."

"But if not to-day, they would have to meet them to-morrow."

"Not in the open like this. *Amigo mio*, my heart is heavy for my brave blacks. God grant they may not go down like canes in a hurricane!"

Then he turned away, and addressing his men, said—"Soldiers! Patriots! We are in the midst of the enemy, and we must get back to camp as soon as possible. Our way lies through them and over them. That is the shortest way, the way we usually tread, and tread victoriously. Follow me, and I will lead you home, comrades. *Dios y Libertad!*"

The voice of Morelos was clear and sonorous as a bell, and it gave out a splendid note of courage. The men responded with loud cries, demanding to be led against the enemy. The brave fellows seemed willing enough and eager, and made a good show of enthusiasm; but I, who knew them well, detected a certain nervousness, which made me a bit anxious.

We were in hopes that the enemy would attack us, in which case, being on rising ground, we should have had the advantage of position. But this was evidently not his design. He remained quietly where he was, knowing that aid from the other side of the hill was on its way to him. Very soon several of our scouts who had ascended the hill returned, and reported that a strong body of infantry was within two-thirds of a league, marching directly upon us.

"We must go down to these fellows at

once, or we shall be doubled upon," said Morelos.

He was for leading the men himself, counting his own life of no more value than mine, or any other common officer's; but to this I would not assent, and eventually the other officers sided with me.

"If I do not lead them, you must," said Morelos; and wishing for nothing better, I led them. The men cheered in a pretty way when they saw that I was to head them. Then thought I within myself, being pleased with their confidence in me, "They shall win, if not by strength then by cunning."

I spoke a few words to hearten them, and told them what they had to do, and how to do it; then I gave the word of command, and we began the advance in open line. Five hundred yards brought us on to level though rough ground, and within two hundred yards of the Spanish troops. There

they stood in perfect silence, like grim statues, with levelled muskets. They were reserving their fire longer than I had hoped, and if it caught us, it would be murderous.

I halted my men for a few moments, closed up the ranks a little, and bidding them remember, we started forward at the double. I kept my eyes riveted on the Spanish officer in command, whom I could distinctly see. How I did strain my ears! How I did strain my eyes! And I believe they answered to the strain like a noble-hearted horse to the spur. We were within a hundred yards of those deadly muskets. I saw the Spaniard's finger move, I caught the sound of a Spanish syllable. "*Abaxo!*" I yelled, dropping to the earth like a stone, as did likewise every man about me. And as we fell, there passed over us a hissing rain of bullets that would have broken us sure as fate.

Springing to my feet, I cried, "Up, men —present—fire!" And they did it—the brave niggers did it gloriously.

"Charge!" And with a yell of defiance, we rushed forward with the bayonet.

The Spaniards had seen us fall—dead, as they thought. They saw us rise as from the dead. Then scores went down under our lead. And before they had made up their minds, whether or not it was a case of miracle, we were stabbing them with our bayonets. Then their European training showed its value. Their discipline saved them. Creoles would have broken and fled; but the Spaniards, unable to withstand our rush, broke up into little groups and squares, and sold their lives in what for us was a very dear market.

For some little while the strife was furious. Man to man we fought, neither giving nor receiving quarter. Twice the Spaniards

tried to rally; but the blacks, whose blood was now hot so that they cared neither for danger nor death, swarmed together like bees, and with wild and horrid yells flung themselves on to the enemy like very demons. They went down, poor fellows, thick and fast, but not much thicker or faster than the foe.

In the heat of the fray, I was attacked by three Spaniards at once. For a while I fought them off, then I slipped and fell on one knee; in a trice a bayonet went through the fleshy part of my left arm, and pinned me to the earth. The man who pinned me had to step aside to make way for his comrades, who rushed forward to slay me. Another moment and I had been as dead as a door-nail. But like a flash, I saw one of my sergeants, a big muscular fellow, spring forth. Seizing the soldier who had pinned me, from behind round the waist,

he lifted him from the ground, and threw him with the strength of an ox straight at my assailants. Down they went like nine-pins, and though they were not much hurt by the fall, they rose no more. The big negro fell on them like lightning, and slew them ere they could raise a hand: for this deed of valour, Morelos made my saviour a captain on the same day, to the delight of himself and his fellow-negroes. Getting on to my feet, I asked the sergeant if he knew whether the General was safe, and which way he had gone.

He laughed and answered, "The Padre is hard at work over there."

I ran as hard as I could to where the fight seemed to be the hardest, and my heart gave a great leap as I beheld the Padre, with only a handful of men, surrounded by Spaniards. His red handkerchief was round his head, he was fighting like a lion, and I heard

above the din his battle-cry of *Dios y Libertad!* What I would have given just then to stand by his side! Our Hope, our Pride, our Chief was fighting for his life, and I was not there to aid him! I felt the hot tears in my eyes.

It took me ten minutes, perhaps, to collect a dozen men who were sane enough to leave off fighting common enemies, to try and save their chief. We had no time to load our guns. We saw that our bayonets were all right, and then shoulder to shoulder and shouting our battle-cry, we rushed on the crowd that surrounded Morelos. Those on the outside turned to meet us, but it was of no use. For a moment they stood firm and met us steel to steel, but our rush was too furious. They went down, they opened, they drew back; and I found myself within a yard of Morelos, only to see a Spanish officer draw a pistol and point it straight

at the breast of the General. The Spaniard was a little to my right and almost as near to Morelos as myself. I hurled my musket at his head, and hit him full in the face just as he fired his pistol, and the bullet went harmlessly over the head of Morelos. Five minutes later the action was at an end.

The Spaniards retreated. We took no prisoners, but we counted one hundred and twenty-three dead bodies of the enemy on the field. Our own loss amounted to seventy-four dead and thirty-one wounded. It was a heavy loss, but it was a glorious victory. Our black levies had fought the Spanish veterans and beaten them; and this greatly stiffened our backbone for the coming battle. When Morelos thanked his brave blacks for their gallantry, his voice trembled a little with emotion. That same day, Morelos made me a General.

CHAPTER IV.

CALLEJA EATS THE LEEK.

Saving the old folk and the babies, I doubt if any one slept a wink at Cuautla Amilpas that same night. The wounded were tenderly cared for by the native women; and as for the dead, we were more proud of them than of many living, seeing as how they had died gloriously, and had left behind them an example of bravery that was worth hundreds of men to us. There was no gloom among us. The inclination was to ring bells, fire guns, drink *aquardiente*, play guitars, and dance the *Jarave*, the *petinera*, the graceful *bomba*, and the questionable

mitate, all night long. And Morelos, who as a priest had learnt no little of human nature, being somewhat of a philosopher as well as a disciplinarian, granted to the men liberty to enjoy themselves for a few hours after their bent. Having had little or no opportunity of seeing the gayer side of Mexican life, I took advantage of the occasion to mend my knowledge.

The Mexican ladies were very gracious to me. One in particular seemed to like me. She was about two-and-twenty, of exceeding loveliness of countenance, tall of stature, and with much grace of carriage and sweetness of manner. Doña Dorotea was a widow and very rich. I danced with her for over an hour, then we strolled through the grounds, along groves of oranges and citrons, under thick vines, and heavy palm-trees. At length we came to a secluded bower in a little wilderness of tropical beauty. The

moon was high and full, and in its vine-scattered and leaf-broken light I looked into her beautiful eyes, and saw that they were full of tenderness and passion. I drew her to me, and our lips met. . . . O Guenilda mine, in setting forth so much of my weakness, I swear to you I have set forth all. From that day to this, I have not sinned against your sweet womanhood and its pure love, though oft have I been in temptation and sore peril. And that thou wilt forgive me, having confessed my fault, I know thee, sweet large-souled woman as thou art, too well to doubt.

At midnight the men were all called in, and set to work erecting barricades and digging intrenchments. Many of the citizens lent a hand in cutting down trees and bearing brushwood. They were with us in sympathy to a man. Morelos had taken up his main position in the plaza, across

which he dug an intrenchment about a hundred yards in length, which was held by some four hundred and fifty men, mostly negroes. There were two streets leading into the plaza in almost parallel lines. The one to the right was defended by three hundred men, of whom one-half were Indians, and some few Creoles: they had three six-pounders mounted behind a parapet, and were under the command of Ermenegildo Galeaño.

The one to the left was held by Fernandez, at present known by the redoubtable name of Guadalupe Victoria. He had two six-pounders, a strong barricade, and three hundred and twenty men, composed in about equal numbers of Creoles, Indians, and negroes. Leonardo Bravo was with Victoria —for so I will call him, though as yet he was unknown to fame. Nicolas Bravo was with Galeaño. As for myself, the newly

made General Rodolfo Polocino, I was with the Padre himself in the plaza.

"*Amigo mio*," said Morelos during the long night, "I fear me there are murmurs afloat, and heartburnings, because of your new rank."

"Then take it back, my General. Let not me be a cause of any trouble or dissension," I answered.

Then Morelos smiled in his strange fascinating way, and said, "No, no; at the least they are brave men and delight in bravery. I will give them till to-morrow night to find out whether you deserve your rank or not."

At which words the blood tingled in my veins, and I vowed to myself that, on the morrow, I would show all whom it may concern what *El Inglés* could do when it came to fighting. Daylight came at last, and showed us the enemy drawn up in the plain outside the town, to the number of over

three thousand. Gay and proud he looked, and sounded, and felt, with his music and banners, his brilliant uniform and prancing horses—for he had a few cavalry, which I sorely envied him. On his way hither, he had captured Ziticuaro, a well-fortified town, and this had greatly exalted his horn. He looked at the open town of Cuautla Amilpas, defended by a few hundred negroes, and sniffed scornfully. But yesterday morning, when only two hundred strong, did he not encounter the main army of the "monster" Morelos, and send it scuttering back to town, as a scared rabbit to its warren? Of a truth this was the legend he had actually heard; therefore was his contempt deep, and his courage high as Popocatepetl behind him. Said Calleja, boastfully—

"Within five hours after I come up with Morelos, I will put him in chains and start him for the capital."

At seven o'clock the bugles sounded, and the enemy advanced in four deep columns to the attack. Whereupon our five six-pounders thundered out so rough a welcome that the advancing columns of invincibles fell back, while their artillery came to the front. Their battery of eight twelve-pounders now came into play, and, getting their range pretty soon, they began to drop balls right on to our guns. We fought our guns as well as we could, seeing that we were altogether overmatched, and were not expert gunners at the best. In half an hour, three of our guns were knocked over and the fire of the other two silenced. The enemy's artillery drew aside, and the four columns rushed forward with great fierceness.

Galeaño's parapet was sadly battered and broken, while in two places there was a breach wide enough for a yoke of oxen to pass through. Just in the nick of time, Nicolas

Bravo managed to block these openings with a number of mule-carts, together with chairs, tables, and other articles of household furniture, which were willingly contributed by the women in the houses.

The two columns opposing Galeaño came steadily on, until they were within a hundred and fifty yards of the parapet, then they discharged their carbines and rushed forward furiously. They were received with deadly volleys of musketry, and dropped in scores, but their charge was not checked, and in a few moments they reached the parapet and the conflict grew very fierce.

Twice the Spaniards swarmed over the parapet, only to be driven back, leaving half their number dead behind them. Being full of fury, our men picked up the dead bodies of the enemy, stuck them in the breaches, and laid them two deep on the top of the parapet, while of others they

made a banquette on which they stood to fire. Pouring in a destructive fire, the Spaniards made another desperate onslaught, and gained the parapet, over which they poured in hundreds. There followed a terrific hand-to-hand combat. Cheered on by Galeaño and Bravo, who fought in the thickest of the fight, our men stood firm and fought like heroes, but they were outnumbered five to one. They fell back step by step, fighting every inch of the way.

Suddenly a large body of the enemy gathered close together, and with wild yells charged headlong down the street. Then our men, already broken into innumerable groups, turned their backs to the foe and fled towards the plaza. In vain did Galeaño and Bravo try to rally them; neither threats nor entreaties could stop their miserable flight.

From the bell-tower of the church, which

was at the back of our intrenchment, I saw the dreadful sight. Morelos was with me. His eyes had in them the battle-light, for he was a true warrior. Turning to me he said, quickly, "If you can save them, do, for God's sake!"

I ran down to the intrenchment, and sallied out with a hundred negroes behind me. Outside I halted them a moment, formed them into line, and said—"Now, boys, understand this: there is to be no running away. We conquer or we die, every man of us. Swear it! In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen!"

And with uplifted hands they swore it.

Half-way across the plaza we met the first of our flying troops, some Indians and Creoles wild with fear. I ordered them to halt, but they paid no attention to me. Behind them I saw scores of our men just

issuing on to the plaza, and all driven forward by the same panic fear. Five minutes earlier they were brave soldiers; now they were dangerous cowards. Again in a loud voice I ordered the first flying group to halt, and for an answer they cast their weapons from them, and fled past us with a yell. Then I gave the word to fire. Twenty of our muskets rang out instantly, and every Indian and Creole in that flying group fell dead. The on-coming crowd of fugitives stood stock-still, as if paralysed. Covering them with all my muskets, I cried out—"Boys, you are mistaken. The enemy is not in front, he is behind you. About-face, shoulder-arms, forward, double-quick, march! *Dios y Libertad!*"

And straightway that crowd of runaways fell into line, faced about, and followed me, with ringing shouts. We had barely gained the head of the street, when we beheld the

last and bravest of Galeaño's men flying towards us for their lives; behind and upon them were hundreds of royalists, who shot and stabbed, and stabbed and shot our men, as they ran together almost side by side. It was nothing short of a massacre, and the street was running with blood.

We stood aside and let the flying patriots pass. Then we opened fire on the Spaniards with beautiful effect. Three volleys we gave them at short range, and with deliberate aim. Every bullet, I verily believe, went home. They stopped their pursuit, halted, wavered, tried to retreat, and found themselves thrust forward by the surging crowd behind. Waving my sword aloft, I cried to my faithful and sworn negroes — "Remember your oath, boys. Charge!" And this time without any shout or cry, in grim silence they rushed

on the dense mass with the bayonet. Disordered and confused, the Spaniards could neither fight nor fly, and when we fell upon them we smote them hip and thigh. They rent the air with groans and shrieks and cursings. Spaniard with Spaniard, they fought and struggled like madmen. We fought our way into the midst of them, silently and in a solid body.

Then of a sudden there rose a shout that thrilled me. Moved by some sudden impulse, simultaneously every one of my sworn negroes shouted at the top of his voice—"In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen!" And with that strange cry upon their lips, they fought like demons. For a while the horrid carnage went on, and the Spaniards, realizing the situation, struggled desperately to hold their own. But my brave negroes were not to be denied. Their numbers were in-

deed diminishing fearfully; but not one in five of the dead bodies, that lay in heaps along the street, belonged to them. In a little while the royalists made up their minds they had had enough of it and to spare, and with loud cries as of sudden pain, they broke and fled. We chased the last of them out of the street, and saw them well on their way to camp. Then we turned back, and found for the first time an opportunity of wondering what fate had befallen Victoria.

On entering the street which he had defended, we saw at a glance that the day must have gone against Victoria. There was no fighting going on, and the street was deserted save for the dead and the dying. These lay all about the street. The barricade was broken down completely, and both the six-pounders were disabled and overturned. The houses were battered and

riddled in every direction. There had been a sharp conflict, but which side had won we could only fear; victors and vanquished had both disappeared from the scene of action; and this looked very dark for us.

All at once we heard a great discharge of musketry, followed by loud cries, in the direction of the plaza. Then we knew that Morelos was attacked. I looked at my men —about seventy strong,—and though they were mostly negroes, I felt full of pride and joy. For they were full of fire and courage, and not a trace of fear was upon them. I spoke a few words of cheer to them, and then we went down the street as fast as our legs could carry us. When we reached the plaza, we halted without any word of command being given, and looked into each other's eyes, being full of horror. The intrenchment had been carried, and swarmed with Spaniards. As I learned afterwards,

they came running in neck to neck with a crowd of Victoria's beaten men, so that Morelos was prevented from firing to advantage.

What we saw was this: Close by the near end of the intrenchment, but in the open plaza, Victoria and a mere handful of men were being hard pressed, by a crowd of furious royalists. At the farther end of the intrenchment was Morelos. I could see the red handkerchief about his head. I could hear him shouting the battle-cry. Behind and on his left hand were houses; on the right and in front was the plaza and the intrenchment, and any numbers of the enemy.

Morelos was cornered. He was at bay. He was outnumbered four to one. But he was gloriously game, and fought like a great elk. Yet seeing him so sorely driven, my heart grew sick within me. I was for flying

to his aid at once; but seeing Victoria's perilous position, I decided I ought to help him first. "Fix bayonets. Charge!" We went right through that crowd of furious royalists. Such of them as could retire retired, and the rest fell and rose no more. Victoria and Leonardo Bravo both embraced me warmly. But I was dying to get to the side of my chief. There was fighting going on all along the intrenchment, so I led my men along the outside till we came within fifty paces of the Spaniards in the plaza. There were about three hundred of them, and they were pressing hard against the embankment on Morelos's right, trying to force their way over with the bayonet.

We emptied our guns into them at short range, and then with a great shout we rushed at them with sabre and bayonet. We went clean through like a knife; but they only closed up again and stood their

ground like men. We came back again the way we went—that is to say, through them. Then they retired sullenly, but half my men were killed. Morelos was still fighting hard; and though I could have joined him on the right, by leaping the intrenchment, I knew I should be of but little use to him, with my handful of men cooped up in a corner.

Just then who should come up but Victoria and Bravo, with about two score men which they had managed to rally. After a hurried consultation, it was agreed that we should cross the intrenchment in a body, and attack the enemy in flank. We entered the ditch, scrambled up the face of the steep scarp, and crouched for a moment at the foot of the parapet. A sudden cry and groan to my left caused me to turn my head, and I saw a Spanish soldier leaning over the parapet. He was laughing. He had just driven his bayonet right through

the shoulder of one of my brave blacks. As I sprang up, he gave his weapon a thrust and sent the negro rolling into the ditch.

I bounded forward and seized the musket, before the man could withdraw it from the thrust. I held on with both hands, but the soldier would not let go. He was leaning across the parapet, shouting for help. I saw a couple of heads rise up, and these were followed by two bayonet-points—not bright and glittering, but red with blood. I know not why, but those little tips of blood-stained steel wrought in me a sudden fury, the like of which I never felt before or since. A blood-madness seized me. A fierce tigrine desire to strike and slay and spare not. A bloody mist came before my eyes, and spread its colour over everything, as though the red lust had eaten into my brain — as in truth it had. I let go the

musket, and in a flash I had the Spanish soldier by the head. The next moment he was dead with a broken neck, and his body went rolling down into the ditch, and fetched up beside that of the negro.

Like master like man, holdeth true of other men besides cobblers and their apprentices. My sworn negroes beheld my savage deed, and, by some strange instinct, divined my ferocious mood. And by an awful sympathy they shared in it. I saw it in their faces, their eyes, their attitude; and a dark delirious joy filled my soul.

"Remember your oath! Forward!" I cried, drawing my sword and springing on to the parapet.

With an inarticulate yell they followed me. For a moment we stood there. One glance at Morelos, who saw us and bellowed out his war-cry like a bull of Bashan. One glance at the fierce faces upturned of the Spaniards,

at the small forest of bayonets below us. Then we sprang right in amongst them.

"Morelos! Morelos!" was my only cry; but my negroes, remembering their oath, cried aloud—

"In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost—Amen, Amen, Amen!" And with that religious formula upon their lips, they did their duty — every man of them.

They gathered round me in a body, and together we fought our way slowly and stubbornly towards our chief. It was tough and grim work—thrust and parry, parry and thrust, the whole time. We fought with bayonets, and, when these failed us, with the butt-end of the musket. For myself, I fought with my sword till it broke, then with my fists for some minutes, till one of my negroes, seeing my plight, thrust a heavy horse-pistol into my hand. And still

the Spaniards held on, and fought like savages. We were getting thinned out fearfully; and I began to wonder how many more I should kill before my turn came, when by some accidental movement there was opened, right in front of us, a clear path to Morelos. We saw him distinctly. It was but the vision of a moment, then the fierce wrestling mass of soldiery came in between, and hid the vision like a solid wall. It seemed like an omen of victory, and sent a thrill through every man. Wrenching a bayonet from a Spaniard who wanted very much to spit me with it, hardly knowing what I did, I shouted at the top of my voice—

"In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, forward! Charge! Morelos! Morelos!"

With a shout that drowned all other cries, the negroes pressed forward. There was a

momentary resistance, and then — heaven be thanked!—the Spaniards uttered strange yells, broke away, scrambled over the parapet in wild haste, and fled precipitately across the plaza.

Just outside the town, being met by a body of fresh troops from camp, they rallied, and in column re-entered the town along a short narrow winding street. Half-way along this street we met them, and they charged us headlong. Morelos himself led us.

We received the enemy with a terrible fire; but we could not check his advance, and in a few moments he was upon us like a hurricane. It was hell let loose. Smoke, din, confusion, the clashing of steel, the rattle of musketry, shouts and groans, and the tramp of a fierce crowd of fighting men. Of a sudden, the *azoteas* or flat roofs of the houses were covered with Indians, led

by Bravo. The people of the place had stored heaps of pebbles for just such an emergency. Poor hands with the musket were the Indians, but it was a sight to see them with their native slings. With an unerring aim they poured showers of stones, almost as deadly as bullets, upon the Spaniards. This was more than they could stand, and presently they turned tail once more and retreated, with great celerity if not with much dignity. It was now three o'clock in the afternoon. Eight hours' fighting we had had, and we had given Calleja and his veterans more than they had bargained for.

CHAPTER V.

AN AMBUSCADE.

Our victory cost us very dear—namely, in killed two hundred and thirteen, thirty-six wounded, and fifteen missing. The enemy was hit still harder, which was our only comfort, and it was cold. He carried off some of his dead and some of his wounded; nevertheless we counted four hundred and twenty-two of his dead bodies, and eighty-five sorely wounded. These latter we carefully collected, and, having no hospital accommodation for them, carried them out of the place, under a flag of truce, in the direction of the camp, and there left them to be attended to

by the royalists, who had with them a good ambulance corps. This was on the evening of the same day as the battle. The next morning, a platoon of soldiers bearing a flag of truce came almost within gunshot of the town, where they halted. They opened out and revealed to us our fifteen missing comrades, three of whom, being wounded, were carried on stretchers; the other twelve were all right to the eye, and had their hands fastened behind their backs. Our joy was very great, the more so because Calleja had heretofore shown himself to be more cruel than courageous.

We were in the act of extolling his unwonted humanity, when we suddenly beheld a sight that froze our blood within us, and made our tongues cleave to the roof of our mouth. Twelve of the musketeers had retired behind the well prisoners, and all at once, without the slightest warning given,

they brought their pieces to the level, and shot every prisoner down dead in cold blood. They waited till the smoke cleared away, and then they bayoneted before our eyes the three defenceless men upon the stretchers. This was Calleja's return for our giving him back his wounded. There is colour in crime. And I will only say that this inhuman deed, when compared with some other of Calleja's deeds, can in fairness only be styled brown, and not black.

Calleja retired with his troops to a small town one league distant, from whence he despatched messengers to Virey Venegas, asking for supplies of artillery, ammunition, and men. At this time it was open to Morelos to retreat, and because the town was open and without defences of any kind, some of the Padre's officers were for taking this step. For myself, I thought this was the only prudent course of action; but I

kept my opinion to myself until I discerned the bent of Morelos' mind, and then I renounced it. So when the Padre said to me one day—the others having said their say—

"*Amigo mio*, what say you? Are we to retreat or stay where we are?"

I made answer thus: "We have four cannon, six hundred muskets, and eight hundred heroes, and the eyes of all men are upon us. Therefore my word is—let us remain where we are. Or if we must move, let it be on the camp of Calleja."

As the saying is, this brought the house down, and silenced all opposition. But my reward lay in the look of gratitude which my chief gave me; though little did he dream that I was speaking against my better judgment. So it came to pass that Morelos did not retreat, but stood firm at Cuautla de Amilpas, and was there besieged. Day

and night we worked at the intrenchments, and built some solid earthworks.

In the course of time, it came to our knowledge that the Virey Venegas had despatched from the capital all the munitions of war which the magazines contained. These we did our best to intercept, but we only succeeded in capturing three nine-pound guns. Of men, so far as we could make out, Venegas had sent Calleja none, having none to send, whereat we rejoiced. As the days went by and still Calleja did not appear, we began, foolishly enough, to dream that perhaps he had had enough of it, and was waiting for us to attack him.

One afternoon I left the town as usual *descubrir el campo*, with half-a-dozen attendants, hoping to be able to discover something of the enemy's movements and intentions. We took a circuitous route, and at length found ourselves in a wild rocky part

covered with dense *chapparal*, some leagues from Cuautla. Here we sat down to rest, on some rocks overhanging a small ravine, through which ran a mule-track. Presently I saw something bright on which the sun was playing, in the distance. In a few moments there were visible a dozen gleaming points. I pointed them out to my men.

"*Lanceros*, General!" they exclaimed in a chorus.

"Yes, and coming this way. They are coming *a mas andar*, at full speed, and will be here in ten minutes. If we cannot catch them, we can at least frighten them."

At this the men laughed, and cried "*Si señor. Asi es la verdad.*"

The ravine below us was about three hundred yards long, deep and narrow, and thickly lined with *chapparal* bushes. Along one side of this I posted my six men, at intervals of about twenty-five yards. My

orders were for them to keep themselves concealed until the fun began, when they were to make as much noise as possible, and shoot down every lancer that tried to escape. They were placed so as to be on a level with the horsemen.

I climbed on to a rock, and peering through some bushes, I had a good view of the lancers just as they came to the head of the ravine. There were thirteen of them, well mounted on spirited chargers, gaily dressed, and armed with sabres, *escopetas* slung across their backs, and steel-tipped lances with scarlet pennons fixed in the right stirrup. They rode pretty close together in two parties of six, while between them was an officer, who rode beside a civilian who seemed a man of importance, judging from his bearing and the size of his escort. A well-packed valise was fastened to the croup of his horse, which was the colour of a peach-blossom.

A great desire to have a conversation with the gentleman immediately seized me; indeed, I had a curious feeling that it was necessary to my happiness for me to examine his pockets, and his fat valise. My interest in the gay *lanceros* almost vanished, and I thought only of the *caballero* so proud-looking and picturesque, with his stiff-brimmed sombrero adorned with gold tassels; his olive-green jacket of Queretaro cloth, bedecked with many little silver buttons; his *zapateros*, rich in gold and silver, drawn over his trousers, reaching only to the knees, and fastened round his waist with a silver chain; his embroidered saddle with a great pommel, and silver-lined sloping back, behind which was strapped his handsome *sarape;* his massive head-gear, bit, gleaming rowels, bridle-reins of bright silk ribbon, and a great tiger-skin that fell down on each side of him, and covered probably, for I could not see,

pistols, sabre, and lasso. Yes, I felt I must have a talk with him. Down the ravine they came at a walking pace, unsuspicious of any lurking danger, until they were right in front of me.

Springing from my concealment, I cried out boldly, "Halt! Surrender! You are surrounded, and escape is impossible."

What followed was laughable in its absurdity. The *lanceros*, thus suddenly challenged, reined back their steeds and huddled together in confusion; then they discharged their *escopetas* apparently in the air, and broke away in full flight down the ravine. The officer in command swore at his men magnificently, and the civilian shook his fist angrily in a trooper's face. But it was of no use. The men were panic-stricken, and fled for their lives, carrying with them their colonel and the civilian, in a wild pell-mell rush. I thought my chance of

having a conversation with the gentleman was becoming small, so I levelled my musket at the peach-blossomed horse and fired. Down went the horse dead. Crack, crack, crack, went our six muskets, and five of the troopers fell from their saddles.

My men sprang from their concealment, and with their bayonets went merrily to work. It was a bit of bloody work while it lasted, being a compound of fierce men and plunging horses. Sword in hand, I sprang down into the ravine, and rushed through the smoke to the peach-blossomed mare. She lay there in her splendid trappings quite dead, also the fat valise was there, which I patted affectionately.

But the civilian had vanished. A moment later a little cloud of smoke blew away, and I beheld him, much to my delight, scrambling nimbly into the vacant saddle of a dead trooper's horse. He was about forty yards

away, and I could have shot him capitally; but with my finger on the trigger, I reflected that if I killed him I should never have a talk with him. So I lowered my piece, and decided like him to borrow a mount.

Between him and myself there was a terrible *mêlée* raging; my men had closed up, and the brave niggers, some of whom were down, were having a hot time of it with some half-dozen of the *lanceros*, who could fight well enough when they found they could not run. I cast another glance at the fat valise, and I saw lying beside it my gentleman's lasso. This I seized, hardly knowing why, and running past my men, whom I cheered on lustily, I got hold of a horse that was kicking on his back in a hollow, set him on his feet, and mounted him. My gentleman by this time was just at the outlet of the ravine, going at a hard pace, and after him I went at a gallop.

I suppose I ought not to have deserted

my brave blacks, but my gentleman was so attractive to me that I could not find in my heart to leave him alone. Moreover, my men were no worse off than their opponents; for as I came out on to the open, away in the distance were two flying troopers, and by my troth, one of them was none other than the colonel in command of the *lanceros*. I knew him by his beautiful cocked-hat, with its waving plume.

My gentleman, seeing himself pursued, and recognizing his friends in the distance, altered his course a little, and using his spurs vigorously, made after them. I had neither spur nor whip, only my sword, the flat of which I laid about my horse's flank to some purpose. Over the grassy plain the brute bowled in fine style. I was overhauling the runaway beautifully, and at length got within half-a-dozen strides of him. He was shouting to his dear friend the colonel, ahead of him

some five hundred yards, to slacken pace and help him. But the colonel evidently thought it a pity to spoil the sport, for, having reined up a moment and taken a good look at me, he dashed his spurs into his horse, and went like the wind. Then my gentleman groaned aloud, being full of despair. To comfort him, I yelled—

"Halt, my friend, halt! I do not want to shoot you. I want to talk with you."

But this seemed to render him simply desperate, and he began to prod his gallant steed with his three-inch rowels in a fearful fashion. In five minutes longer, I should have been able to throw my arm round his neck, in true Mexican style, and soothe his distress. Just then, however, we reached rising ground; it was broken and stony, with a dense *chapparal* cover half a mile ahead. Very soon my horse began to show signs of giving out. The distance between

myself and my gentleman actually began to lengthen out. I could scarcely believe my eyes; he seemed to be riding away from me. Again I was tempted to shoot him, but instead of yielding to the temptation, I laid the flat of my sword about my horse with a right good will. The brute made a sudden spurt, dashed forward for a hundred yards like a racer, and then pitched on his head and lay like a stone.

I picked myself up in no time, and then a happy thought occurred to me. I snatched up the lasso, and, running a dozen paces, threw it with all my strength. I had practised throwing it on horseback with considerable success, but never on foot before. Close to me there stood a stout wild fruit-tree, and I had no sooner thrown the *lariat* than I rushed to the tree, and gave the end of the rope several turns round it. I looked up, and at the same moment the lasso stretched

taut with a great twang. Down came my gentleman with a thud, with the rope round his chest and arms, while his frightened horse went with outstretched tail, like one bewitched. Before my gentleman could pick himself up, I was standing over him with my naked sword, which I saw he did not at all relish the sight of.

"Lie down, señor. I have come thus far to talk with you."

The Don lay down on his back, with his arms outstretched. He was a handsome man of about forty, but just now he looked foolish.

"I surrender, General, I surrender. Will you slay me?" he said, hurriedly.

"Possibly, but not yet. I must talk with you first. What weapons have you?"

"*Un puñal solamente, General.* Be merciful."

I took his poniard from him and bade him sit up.

"Now, who are you?" I asked.

"I am Don Baltasar de Tejira."

"You reside at?"

"Mexico."

"Your occupation?"

He hesitated. "A royalist, General."

"That is news, of course. You serve Venegas—in what capacity?"

"Confidential adviser."

"Many thanks, señor. Your business just now?"

"To entertain my very amiable General," he said, smiling.

"*Ya se ve, señor. Pero vengamos el cosa.* You bear despatches from the Virey."

"I did not say so," he said, quickly.

"Give them to me," I demanded.

"Never! by all the saints in the calendar —never, señor!" he cried, with great energy.

"Then I must take them by force."

"I am your prisoner. I am at your mercy."

"Lie down, sir."

He lay down as docile as a lamb, while I ransacked his pockets. In a secret pocket at the back of his jacket—to get which I had to make the Don go *ventre à terre*—I found what I was seeking. It was nothing less than a despatch from the Viceroy to General Llano, who was besieging Don Miguel Bravo at Izucar, ordering him to repair at once with all his force to Cuautla de Amilpas, and place himself under command of Calleja. I knew now the reason of Calleja's inaction. I looked at the Don as I pocketed the despatch. He smiled, and asked—

"Does it repay you for all your trouble?"

"Quite so. It seems you are sending us two Generals to capture, instead of one."

"Ha! then my General serves under the rebel Morelos, does he?"

"I have that honour, sir."

"A thousand pities, my General—a

thousand pities. I took you for a brigand chief. You are worse, it seems."

"*Viva Usted mil años.*"

"*Como asi.* Yet it is the truth. And you are not even a Mexican. An Americano, I suppose?"

"No. An Englishman."

"Impossible! an Englishman and a revolutionist!"

"Why not? At home I am a Tory—that is, I am of those who stick up for King and Constitution, like my forebears for many a generation. And they are worth sticking up for."

"If my General were a Spaniard, perhaps he would think the same of our King and Constitution."

"Probably, as a Spaniard, but not as a Mexican. You Spaniards treat the Mexicans like dogs. You are forbidden to marry with them. You deny them promotion at the Bar, in the Church, in the army. You keep

them poor and in ignorance. You rob them with the right hand and the left. They must not manufacture wines or brandies, they must not plant olives, they must not cultivate silk-worms, and they have been ordered to grub up their very vines, while tobacco is a Crown monopoly. Thus you stifle their commerce in order to compel them to take your Spanish products. You oppress them commercially, politically, and socially. Meanwhile, your administration is about as corrupt as it can well be. Your justice is not blind and impartial; it winks and leers. Your offices and your officers are all in the market. You come out poor, spend more than your salaries, and go back to Spain rich. Herein is a marvel. Your king is a wretched captive, who fawns on his captor, like a whipped hound on the hand that whips him. Half your nobles are traitors. Your country is torn asunder by political factions. Your central Junta has

no legitimate authority here in Mexico. It is about time for you Spaniards to get home, and leave the land and the people to whom you have brought every curse, and not a single blessing. An Englishman all the world over is a lover of freedom, and fair-play. Therefore, your humble servant is a follower of Morelos."

This was a long speech, and I delivered it with some force, though its effect would have been greater had it been spoken in the language that is the natural vehicle of such ideas. For I am apt to think that the English tongue is Freedom's native accent. The Don played with his moustache, and smiled sweetly all the time.

When I had done, he remarked, softly, "You English are a great people, a great people, but a little mad. You have no Church but your Parliament, and no creed but political liberty. You think it is your mission to teach the world the true political

doctrine, and the secret of good government. You are great believers in yourselves. Your very convicts will found colonies, and set up imitation British Parliaments. Your outlaws and adventurers on their travels, by a cunning trick of the national imagination, turn themselves into parliamentary apostles, missionaries, ambassadors, and——and generals. By our Lady, a great people, my General, but a little mad!"

In this manner did the Don have his innings. His reference to outlaws and adventurers stung me not a little, and I felt inclined to punch his head. But I restrained myself. I thought it was time to be getting back to the scene of action, being anxious to find out how the skirmish in the ravine had ended. The Don begged hard to be set at liberty, but I told him that his fate was in the hands of Morelos, at which his face fell. Together we set out for the ravine.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME ROGUE'S MUSIC.

We spoke but few words with each other by the way, for the Don seemed very downcast. He had evidently made up his mind that his life was not worth a *centavo*, for it was beyond his comprehension that the "monster" Morelos could be less cruel than Calleja. We had come within half a mile of the ravine, and the setting sun was straight in our eyes. All at once the silent Don sprang on to a rock, and waving his sombrero, began shouting at the top of his voice. I looked, and there on some rising ground behind which the sun was sinking, and bathed in fiery splendour,

I beheld with blinking eyes the figure of a horseman. A second glance revealed the upright shaft of a lance, and the fluttering pennon at its head. It was a Mexican *lancero* beyond doubt. And my poor blacks, they were all dead, or far distant, for that lancer to be sitting there all glorious in the setting sun. The sight made me very wroth. Bringing my musket to the front, I cried to the Don—

"Come down there, and shut up, or I'll pot you as sure as snipe are snipe!"

He obeyed instantly, but he looked diabolically happy, and even had the impudence to say—

"Look, he sees us, he waves his lance, he comes at a gallop! *Alabo á dios.*"

"Yes, sir; and you will see I shall bowl him over with one shot. And then I will cut off his head, and I'll make you carry it from here to Cuautla."

This I said with a grim manner, so that the Don looked uneasy. Then I seized him, and bound his hands behind his back, and wound the lasso round and round his arms and body, and fastened the end to my left arm in such wise that I could slip it easily, did need arise. Furthermore, I took advantage of the rock on which he had stood, and placing myself behind it, I prepared for battle.

In another minute the lancer came galloping up. I brought my gun to bear, my finger was on the trigger, another moment he would have been a dead man. Just then, however, along the barrel of my gun, I caught a view of his face. It was black! It was one of my own brave blacks, mounted on a lancer's charger. Giving him a shout of welcome, I turned and looked at the Don. He was utterly crestfallen, and the very picture of mortification. Nor did

he seem to take much comfort from the reflection that, as I reminded him, he had escaped the task of carrying to Cuautla the head of a *lancero*.

My bonnie black was delighted beyond measure at my safe return. I asked him how the day had gone, and he said, "Very well."

"Where are your comrades?"

"Dead, General," answered the man, promptly.

"All?"

"All, General."

"And the enemy?"

"I do not know how many there were at the start, but there are the dead bodies of eleven *lanceros* lying in the ravine. I slew the last of them with this lance, General. Then I mounted his horse and came to look for you."

"You are a brave fellow," I answered, sighing deeply, while the Don groaned aloud.

Arrived at the ravine, I found it was even so as the man had reported. Five out of my six blacks lay dead. But how could I repine, seeing they had died so bravely, and had slain all their enemies save the two that had run away, of which one was their colonel? With some little difficulty we caught three horses, two of which were wounded but could travel. On the backs of the wounded pair we strapped our five dead comrades, and I gave them into the charge of the man; I also put behind him the fat valise of my prisoner. I and the Don rode on the remaining horse, carrying as many of the weapons of the dead as we could. And so we came at nightfall to Cuautla. And the next morning we buried our dead with military honours; and Morelos made the surviving black a captain.

My chief attached much importance to the despatch I had captured, and warmly thanked

me in public and in private. As for the Don, we kept him a close prisoner, thinking he would make a valuable exchange some day. And Morelos allowed me to tell him on the second day that his life would be spared. This, indeed, was only common humanity; but it is well to observe that with the Spaniards the common thing was inhumanity. They murdered their prisoners in cold blood. They shot men under a flag of truce, and boasted of it. They violated the conditions of surrender, and butchered brave men who laid down their arms on the distinct understanding that their lives should be spared. While I write this, hundreds are now living who have been prisoners in the hands of the Patriots; but it is a rare thing to find a living patriot who was ever a prisoner in the hands of the Spaniards.

Don Baltasar de Tejira looked for nothing less than death; and when I told him that

his life was safe, his astonishment equalled his gratitude. He would have it that he owed his life to me, and nothing would convince him to the contrary. As a simple truth, Morelos did give his fate into my hands. But Morelos knew me too well to think that I was a butcher, and so in giving him to me Morelos knew he was giving the Don his life. This was like him all over. Morelos did many noble actions, with such fine cunning that others got the credit for them. Don Baltasar, being full of gratitude, said to me—

"My General, though I am no traitor, yet will I say this to you. Think not that Llano will be delayed in his advance by my capture. A courier, travelling by another route, left the capital on the same day as I did. And by this, Llano is probably on his way hither."

Thanks to this information, we lost no

time in completing our poor defences; and in the event, the words of the Don proved true. Two days later our scouts reported that Calleja had been joined by Llano. This was on the first day of March, and on the fourth day the siege of Cuautla began, which might well be called the Saragossa of Mexico. Calleja and Llano took up positions on opposite sides of the town, and commenced a furious bombardment. At first the effect was very great, both upon the troops and the inhabitants; but in the course of a few days, this demoralization was at an end. We got quite used to the continual roar of the guns, and the crashing of balls through the walls of houses.

I have seen a group of lads dodge a cannon-ball with no more concern than if it were a football. And it became a favourite amusement of the urchins, to watch the balls as they went bounding along the wide

streets, and to follow them and pick them up. Seeing them one day so employed suggested to me an idea which I imparted to Morelos, and he straightway caused it to be announced that he would pay a certain price per dozen for the collected balls. By this means we returned to the enemy many hundreds of his own balls, but we had to be very economical with our powder, as our stock was but small.

In the third week of the siege the enemy mounted a mortar, and began to throw shells, which exploded with more noise than damage, though at times they wrought havoc. There is something fiendish in a shell, seeming to bring with it the bottled-up malignity of its senders; compared with it, a cannon-ball is a good honest creature, doing its work in a blunt straightforward way, with no secret malice and no sudden rage. The enemy showed no inclination to

come to close quarters. He was in comfortable camps, and, knowing that time was on his side, he amused himself by pounding away at us almost without cessation, day or night. His work was to keep us busy and on the alert, leaving us no moment of rest. And for the rest, he counted on Famine doing what he himself could not.

The town was ill provisioned to stand a siege, and by the end of the month food began to be scarce. People began to hide their scanty stores, and apply for relief at the public granaries, which Morelos had instituted. Then all at once there seemed to come a sudden sense of famine. It was an awful consciousness, and overhung us all like a black cloud. Everybody was hungry, and there was nothing to eat. Children cried aloud in the streets for bread. There was not left a horse or a mule, a cow or a goat, an ass or a sheep, in the whole town. Then

all the dogs and cats mysteriously disappeared. Once I saw a man whose movements appeared suspicious. He had something under his jacket, which he seemed anxious to hide. I accosted him, and demanded to know what he was concealing. Under threats, the poor wretch produced a dead rat.

"Do not rob me of it, señor, for the love of the Blessed Trinity! I have had nothing to eat for sixty hours," he moaned piteously.

A lizard fetched two dollars in the open market.

At this time, the character of Morelos shone illustrious. He lived only on maize-bread and water, and shared in all the privations of his men. And though the latter grew thin and weak and frightfully gaunt, the example of their chief inspired them to do their duty, with an enthusiasm and fidelity that seemed to me marvellous. Not a

man shirked his duty, not a man showed discontent, and, above all, not a man deserted.

Morelos wished to hold out until the rainy season (*estacion de las aguas*) began, which would compel the enemy, in all probability, to raise the siege through sickness. This, however, would not set in until the end of May or beginning of June; and how we were to exist for six or seven weeks longer, and still man the intrenchments and work our guns, was beyond our wit to foresee. We had had great hopes that help would come to us from outside; nor were our friends idle. Matamoros, in particular, was very active. He hovered round the enemy, cutting off many of his reinforcements and detachments, and doing him no little damage. This was all very well, but it did nothing to fill our empty stomachs; and as one attempt after another to relieve us failed, we ceased to have much hope from that quarter.

One day when crossing through the town I heard, of a sudden, a tumult of shouts and cries, followed by some shooting. I made sure the enemy had at last attacked us. I ran forward, and when I entered the intrenchment I found it wellnigh deserted, while the intervening space between us and the enemy's camp was covered with our men, running to and fro like madmen. I thought at first it was a case of wholesale desertion; but no, they were not heading for the camp, but just running hither and thither in a most strange manner. Then a shudder ran through me, for it seemed to me that the strain upon them had been too much, and they had been seized with sudden madness. My agony for a few moments was indescribable. I broke out into a cold sweat.

Then in a flash the tragedy was transformed into a comedy, as I beheld a cow, with tail erect and wild with fright, heading

for the intrenchment, followed by all the men. They had seen her straying, and the impulse to have her and eat her swept them out in full chase. Boom, boom, boom, came the roar of the enemy's guns. Why in the world they did not fire before I cannot understand, but perhaps they were too much amused, or astonished, or afraid. We lost only one man, and we had got a live cow; and the men felt that they had got her cheap. What the dead man would have said about the bargain, could he have been asked, none troubled themselves to reflect.

It was on the afternoon of the day but one following that Galeaño sought me out, in order, as he said, to consult me on an important matter. When we were quite alone, Galeaño opened the conversation with the question, "Do you not think that we have had about enough of it?"

"For my part, yes, we have had quite enough of it. What then?" I answered.

"Why not desert? We should not be the losers."

I thought he was joking, so I laughed and said, "Very good. You set the example, and I will follow."

"Well, I have arranged it all, and to-night I am going to turn traitor."

This he said with so serious a countenance that I was staggered. Involuntarily I placed my hand on my sword.

"What! you mean to discover me then, eh?" he cried, fiercely.

"Not quite, you villain. But I mean to kill you. Draw and defend yourself," I exclaimed, unsheathing my blade.

Whereupon Galeaño sank into a chair, and roared with laughter. I looked at him in astonishment, and, wondering, a curious feeling came over me; it was worse than any

sea-sickness. I had made a sudden rush for the sublime, and there I stood bewildered on the precipitous brink of the ridiculous. I saw it all in a flash—it was nothing but a bit of Galeaño's grim humour. Angry is not the word; I felt ill.

"*Idiota! Bobon!* What mean you by such *bufonada?*" The more I abused him, the more he laughed. Then I lost my temper.

"Though nature meant you to play the fool (*hacer el bobo*), she did not make me for a spectator. Good day, sir!"

As I turned on my heel to retire, Galeaño sprang to me, and, putting his arm round my neck, expressed his sorrow and begged forgiveness.

"My General looked so fine, so heroic, so —so like the ever-immortal Don Quixote, that——"

"There! confound you, shut up!" This,

being in English, almost startled Galeaño. He drew back a step, then he smiled and said—

"A dreadful English oath was that, I am sure. But the *vomito* has done him good, I hope?"

"Yes, I am better now. What is it you wish to tell me?"

"We must see first of all that no listeners are about," he replied, leaving the room of the *meson* in which we were.

He came back presently and said, "Now I will tell you all about it. I have been in communication with the Spaniards. The *Gachupines* have tried hard to corrupt me. Calleja has promised me the royal *indulto*, a commission in the army, and a large sum of money. I am to introduce them to-night into the trenches. A neat little plan, my General, do you not think?"

"Yes. How came they to think that you would turn traitor?"

"By our Lady of Guadalupe, I know not, *los villanos! bellaconazos!* But I will be even with them. They shall come into our trenches this night, Polocino. And we will give them some rogue's music. What say you?"

We talked the matter over for some time, and then we repaired to the headquarters of Morelos, and laid our design before him. The Padre had a frank and honourable soul, and relished not treachery in any form; so that we had no little difficulty in winning his consent. This obtained, we left him, and at once began to make preparations for giving a warm welcome to the dear friends, who were coming to see us that night.

They were very prompt, and at the appointed hour of midnight they came. It was a dark night, the moon, just risen above the tops of the hills, being much obscured by heavy black clouds. I had posted my-

self, with about fifty of my men, in a small orchard of Gamboa pear-trees. Here, a few minutes before midnight, I was joined by Galeaño. He was quite breathless and excited.

"*Cuidado! chito!* They are coming," he exclaimed, in a low voice.

"How many are there of them?" I enquired.

"*Santisima Trinidad*, I know not! Two hundred, I should think."

"Is it possible?"

"Alas, yes! I could not count them all. They think I am safe in Calleja's camp by this. Will they not stare when they find out their mistake, the rogues!"

With this, Galeaño left me and made his way to where his men were placed. He had hardly gone, before there was audible a strange dull sound on the plain beyond the intrenchment. It came nearer and nearer,

and yet retained its almost indistinguishable character. I knew well what it was. It was the measured yet stealthy tread of a crowd of men. For some moments there was perfect silence, and then the parapet in front of us was all at once crowded with dark figures. My heart grew sick at the desperate game we were playing, as I watched the swarming mass of Spaniards that began to line the banquette, and I would have given almost anything to have had them on the other side again. I could just hear a low hum of voices, and once or twice I caught the faint gleam of a bayonet. They formed in column and moved noiselessly forward.

Beside two of our guns they came across the figures of three semi-recumbent soldiers. Sleeping sentinels! They stabbed them to the heart. There were full a dozen of these strange sleepers, crouched in various positions here and there. Not one awoke, so heavy

with weariness and famine was their slumber. With swift dexterity the Spaniards sighted them and slew them, and not a single cry of anguish or alarm broke the stillness of the night. I felt how the enemy was chuckling at his success. The Spaniards held on their way, meeting with no obstruction, for a good two hundred yards. Another hundred and fifty yards and they would be in the town, and then the comedy would turn into tragedy with a vengeance. It was full time for Galeaño to act. Was he after all a traitor? It was a horrible thought. Just then I saw a Spanish officer stoop and lift a figure from the ground, and carefully examine it. *O cielos!* the sleepers were all dummies! They had been slaying crude effigies. Now they had discovered our trick, and by the same token they scented treachery. Twenty seconds more, and Galeaño would be too late.

At that moment there was a sudden belch-

ing of flame in the darkness, followed by the sullen roar of a cannon, and the ball clave that column of Spaniards from end to end. Next came a heavy roll of musketry, and then I heard the voice of Galeaño, shouting in fierce irony as he charged the enemy—

"*Galeaño, el traidor! Galeaño, el traidor!*"

I led my men forward at the run, and we took the Spaniards in the rear. Just as we started, a curious thing happened. Amid the shouts and cries of the combatants, I heard distinctly a voice cry out in English, "Give it the damned niggers! For king and country!" The words sent a quick thrill through me. Yet I felt sure it was an illusion, the more so because none of my "niggers" had heard any such cry. It was very striking, however, and for some moments I was carried away with an overpowering flood of home memories. With an effort I thrust them aside, and in another minute I

was in the thick of the fight. Were I a letter-writer for a newspaper, I could perhaps set down a full account of the combat; for the best descriptions of such events are ever the work of persons who did not participate in them.

The actual combatants see, individually, very little of the whole scene, their attention being usually engaged by an enemy who means business. I saw at a glance that the royalists, though wofully cut up, had rallied from their first shock of alarm, and were fighting desperately. I remember feeling glad that we had adopted the precaution of fastening a white piece of linen on the right shoulders of our men, otherwise we should have been unable to distinguish friend from foe, in the uncertain light. To the cry of "Morelos! Morelos! *Dios y Libertad!*" we fought our way right in among the Spaniards. Presently I caught sight of their leader. A

medium-sized man and bareheaded, he kept cheering on his men, crying aloud in Spanish—

"Strike home! No quarter! For king and country!"

Meanwhile he fought like a bull, and all who came within reach of his sword went down. I knew not why, but his voice thrilled me every time I heard it. It took me some little time to get at him, but at last we fronted each other. With a shout I rushed at him, and, as our swords crossed, I could have sworn I heard him mutter "At last, damn him!" I knew it was only a fancy, but it was a trick of the brain that affected me powerfully; for at such times men are apt to be a little superstitious.

It is possible that my antagonist was a better swordsman than I, though I honestly doubt it. But whatever the cause, in a couple of minutes my sword flew out of my hand, and it was only by nimbleness I saved

my life, as my opponent made a desperate lunge at me. The forward movement of his was so furious that, for a moment, he lost his balance. Instantly I took him in the flank with my fist, and with a stunning blow from my left shoulder, I sent him reeling. As he fell on his knees, one of my brave blacks was on the point of bayoneting him in the back. But I snatched the weapon out of his hands.

I saved my opponent's life, and again I well-nigh lost my own; for he leapt quickly to his feet, and sprang at me like a madman. The encounter seemed to resolve itself into a duel, and a fiercer struggle I never engaged in. The fellow was a beautiful swordsman, and his weapon played about me in splendid form. He laid my left cheek open, thereby giving me what I hope my Guenilda will count a beauty-scar. He thrust me in the ribs pretty hard. Then he got his sword into my left arm, and that was my opportunity. Before

he could withdraw his weapon, I pushed him with my bayonet. Had he stood, it would have gone through his heart; but he loosed hold of his sword and fell backwards. I ought perhaps to have killed him there and then, but I did not.

"Surrender!" I cried.

"Oh yes, with pleasure," he gasped in Spanish. Then to my amazement he added in English—

"You damned nigger rebel!"

I bent down and looked into his face, and lo! it was the face of—*Archibald Crump.*

CHAPTER VII.

A MAN OF TRUE SENTIMENT.

I COULD scarcely believe my own eyes.

"Why, Crump, is it possible! What on earth brings you here?" I exclaimed, in English.

To this day, I am not clear in my own mind that he did not know me all the time. Why else did he mutter, "At last, damn him!" as our swords crossed? On the other hand, when he called me a "damned nigger rebel" in English, it seems hard to believe that he knew that I should understand him, for he was quite at my mercy. Moreover, I was not a "nigger," though I

know that Crump was quite equal to calling me one. It is a matter I cannot determine; but this will I say: if Master Archibald Crump did know me, then a better bit of acting I never saw on or off the stage. For at my words he sprang on to his feet, and, looking me closely in the face, exclaimed in his profane way—

"My God! Poloc, is it really you?"

Then he shot out his hand, and, grasping mine in a hearty shake, said—

"Old man, I'm as glad as a bullfinch. Is there a *Leather Bottle* inn anywhere about, where we can go and have a confab and a drink? I'm as dry as a fish."

"I am afraid not," I answered with a laugh; "but you had better be taken care off till this affair is over."

"All right. I will stroll round and smoke a *cigarro*," he said, coolly moving away.

"*Tener de ahi!* You forget, Crump, you are a prisoner!"

Two or three of my men had already laid hold of him, but he shook them off angrily.

"For heaven's sake, Poloc, keep these black devils from off me, or there will be murder, if it is murder to kill pigs! I am a prisoner, am I?" he said.

"*A buen seguro.*"

"*Y bien qué?* There, damn the lingo! What do you want me to do?"

His brusqueness somewhat nettled me. I called four of my men and bade them convey him to Morelos, with a message as to his safety. Then to Crump—

"These men will see you safe."

"Where are they taking me to?"

"To Morelos."

"To Morelos! He will return you my head on a charger, I suppose?"

"No fear. He is not the man to do a thing like that," I said, with a laugh.

"Isn't he, though! You know him, and familiarity breeds contempt, even of monsters. But I would rather remain a stranger to him. The scoundrel might——"

"That is enough, Crump. You forget that he is my chief."

"Oh no, I don't, but——"

"You don't, eh? Then if you say another disrespectful word about him in my presence, I will knock you down. You had better go now."

And he went without a word. By this time the struggle was over, and not a single living Spaniard remained in the intrenchment. A few survivors had fled back to camp, and all the rest were dead. Early next morning I saw Morelos.

"Here, surely," said he, "is a strange coincidence. *Amigo mio* indulges in a per-

sonal combat with the leader of the surprise party, captures him, and discovers in him a fellow-Englishman and a dear old friend."

This was news to me that Crump was the leader of the Spaniards, and so I said.

"Yet is it quite true. Galeaño will tell you so. He has seen him, and he says that not only was he the leader of the party, but he is the very person who conducted the negotiations for Galeaño's treachery. But trouble not yourself, *amigo mio*. Not a hair of your friend's head shall suffer."

I was sorely tempted to disavow Crump's claim of friendship, to Morelos; but again I yielded to the promptings of that better part of my nature, the which had I disregarded more, I sometimes think, my troubles had been fewer. For a dash of the devil is useful to a man, when thrown in evil circumstances and among evil men; which is, I grant, a sad thing to say, and a sadder

thing to think,—yet such is life, as those do know who are best qualified to certify.

To find that Crump was alive and well, and I not his murderer, was to me a relief beyond measure and a joy beyond words. For though, God rest their souls! I have slain many men in battle, also I have spared many whose lives were fairly forfeit: to take a man's life for a mere personal wrong or insult is, to my thinking and feeling, an act abhorrent. With some pleasure would I, as the saying runs, thrash him within an inch of his life. But I would stop at the inch. My deep joy on discovering that Crump's blood was not to be laid to my charge, was but a measure of the secret anguish I had endured. Moreover, to be quite frank, I was extremely well pleased to see an English face once again, and that it came from Poloc was no little in its favour. Also, and perhaps chiefly, I was

burning to hear some word of my Guenilda, to whom I had written more than once, but had had no word in return. Ah me! all this sounds very lame now, in the light of subsequent experience; and I feel something of contempt for myself for being so ready to forget and forgive.

I think my chief natural defect is that I am not a good hater. I regret it, but I cannot mend it. Crump, though carefully watched, was not kept a close prisoner, and was free to go about the town. He was assigned lodgings in a *posada* embowered in trees. When I went to call on him, which I did after having had my wounds attended to, and had taken some rest, I found him comfortably seated on the *azotea*, smoking.

"Well, old man, I thought you were never coming to see me. How are we after the tussle last night?" He waited not for an

answer, but rattled on. "I fancy we were pretty well sold last night, and badly hit too, from what that villain Galeaño tells me. By Jove! I thought at one time we had the place sure. That dummy trick, too! Pshaw! it makes me sick to think of it. But what in the world brings you here, Poloc?"

Seeing that he waited for an answer, I said—

"Very much the same as brings you, I fancy."

"I don't know about that," he replied, and a strange look crossed his face. It was only for a moment, then he gave a short hard laugh, and continued—

"To tell truth, I came to seek you."

"And how did you know where to look for me?" I enquired, a little incredulous.

"Oh, went to no end of trouble, I can tell you. At last I found out the skipper of the boat you crossed in. I crossed with him.

I discovered that curious old Quaker cobbler you lodged with—a funny old stick that! From him I gathered that you had started South, bound whither he knew not. He had heard you speak, he remembered, of Mexico. I made enquiries about Mexico, and at length some fellow with a turn for facts informed me that there was a revolution going on there. Then I said within myself, 'Ralph Poloc has no trade at his finger-ends wherewith to earn a living, but being a Poloc he can fight; questionless, he has gone a-fighting.' I came on to Mexico city, where I joined the royalists, making sure you would be on the right side. I could hear nothing of you till about a fortnight ago. Then people began to talk of one of Morelos' generals, an Americano by report, of the name of Rodolfo Polocino. By Jove! old man, you've got a name and a fame in the capital."

At this I laughed, and felt foolishly proud.

"You are a Morelos *en miniatura*. A little monster. A Fire-eater. A War-demon, slaying men with your eyes, and your breath, as well as with sabre and carbine. No; I am not joking. You are already a legendary character—I mean, a popular hero. Hearing so much, I needed no more. I applied for permission to serve under Calleja, and so here I am. Are you glad to see me?"

I thought that a rather impudent question, all things considered.

"That depends. I would know wherefore you sought me across the Ocean?" I answered.

He blew out a cloud of smoke that hid his face for some seconds. When it had cleared, he said—

"Oh, for the matter of that, I had vowed that I would follow you, if need be, round

the world. A penance-pilgrimage, old boy. You understand?"

"I daresay I shall, if you will explain."

"Do you need an explanation? Poloc, I wronged you badly, but—I—I did so love her, old man. You don't know what my feelings have been ever since. I had lost her beyond all hope, and you, my old friend, I had driven out of the country. To a man of true sentiment, what could be more painful? Can you forgive me, old man?"

He said this with every note of sincerity, and I—well, I have already owned to the deep defect of not being a good hater. I took his outstretched hand, and said—

"You have caused me much suffering. You have done me great damage, Crump. But, on repentance shown, a good Christian should forgive, we are told, seventy times seven. And though I am but a poor kind of a Christian, I cannot find in my heart

to nurse the memory of your wrong-doing. Yes, I forgive you, Crump, from the bottom of my heart, seeing you have come all this way to seek my forgiveness!"

"You are a trump, Poloc. Spoken like a parson. And now that bit of business is over, we will forget all about it," he cried, in a manner that seemed to me a trifle brusque for a man of true sentiment.

After that we had a long talk about home, but not a word escaped Crump's lips concerning my Guenilda; nor could I bring myself to ask of him any information, on the one subject that was to me supreme. I asked him if it was true what Morelos had told me.

"Yes, quite true," he answered, with a laugh. "The whole thing was my idea, and I think Galeaño was an ass for his pains. But say, why on earth are you backing these nigger rebels? Do you think it is respect-

able to do a thing like that? You, a Poloc, a revolutionist!"

"Well, in the first place, it is not a 'nigger' movement. 'Tis true the bulk of Morelos' men are negroes, but not all. It is a national movement that is afoot. It is taken up by the native Mexicans, and you don't call them negroes, I hope?"

"They are precious little better."

"Still they are native Americans, not Africans. Then we have a lot of mestizos, natives with white blood in their veins."

"Yes, miserable half-breeds, in whom the Indian strain represents the donkey, and the European strain the mule. Stupidity and vice!"

"That is a libel as applied to the better class of mestizos. Then we have some fine creoles, pure-blooded Spaniards, whose only offence is that they were born in Mexico, and love their country. Therefore, they are made

political pariahs, inferior to the Castilian cobbler, or the Manchego mule."

"Not many of the creoles are on your side, I am thinking. Though I am free to admit, if I were a creole, I should turn revolutionist. Before I would be trampled on by a set of Spanish tyrants, swindlers, thieves, voracious placemen, impecunious courtiers, fools, fops, beaux, coxcombs—Gad, I'd turn bandit!"

I laughed at this outburst from a royalist captain. Then I said—

"In the next place, the patriots are not rebels. The Spanish king is in a dishonourable captivity. The Spanish Government is chaotic. Spain itself is rent and torn with political dissensions. The Central Junta has no authority to impose its will upon the Mexican nation. The Mexicans have had enough of the Spaniards. They say the Gachupines must go. They have a right to

say it. But to call them rebels is ridiculous."

"You are about right, old man, come to think of it; and I think I've had about enough of them. Truth is, I don't care a *peso* for one side or the other. But as old friends we will stick together, fight under the same flag, suffer for the same noble cause, die on the same glorious field, and all the rest of it. Go you, Poloc, straight away, and tell that Immortal Hero, Don José Maria Morelos, that henceforth I am his man. *Dios y Libertad!*"

"Nay," I answered, "Morelos wants patriots, not mercenaries. If you care not a *peso* for his cause, why should he welcome you?"

"There you go again, just like a preaching friar. What Morelos wants is fighting material. Give him that, and, if he is not a donkey, he will accept it gladly, and no questions asked. Moreover, why need the

Padre know, unless you tell him, that I have a mind above the strife of Spanish and Mexican kites and crows? Stay, though, there is another alternative. Come with me over to the royalists. They will be jolly glad to have you, old man."

There was in all this such an utter absence of all pretence of principle or morality, that it was impossible to feel angry. Only, in the mouth of a man of true sentiment, it did sound amazingly odd.

"No, thank you. I may go over to the camp of the royalists, but when I do, I shall have behind me a few hundred of my brave blacks. And I doubt whether your friends will be jolly glad to see me."

"In that case, I must remain here."

"You will find it hard lines. Know you not that there is a famine among us?"

"What!" he exclaimed, with a start; "is that true?"

"It is only too true."

"Is that the reason, then, that I have had nothing but vile bread offered me to eat?"

"What you call vile bread has become a rare and costly luxury with us."

"Gad! I thought everybody looked mighty hungry; but I thought it was the nature of the beast. By Jove, I'm better with the royalists! They will at least feed a fellow. Tell you what, Poloc. I will go back as a spy, if Morelos will let me. I am no good at fighting, with an empty belly. Would you believe it, I've gone frightfully hungry all of a sudden. I must see the General at once," said Crump, with an earnestness that was quite comical, getting on to his feet and going below.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN CALLEJA'S TENT.

After the ill-starred attempt to capture the place by treachery, the Spaniards maintained a heavy firing for many days. One would have thought they were under a contract to throw so much metal into the town in a given time, so furiously did they work their guns day and night. The town was half in ruins, and the sufferings entailed upon the inhabitants were very great. We hourly looked for a general assault to be made upon the place, so that we had to maintain the sharpest vigilance, and keep the men constantly in the trenches. The

effect of all this upon the men, half famished and overworked, began to be very serious; they fell sick by the score, which only made it the harder for those who remained well. In course of time, these latter grew so weak that they were barely able to discharge their duties.

We kept our feeble batteries going only by relieving the gunners every half-hour; they would stagger, fall, swoon, through sheer physical exhaustion. Lean, gaunt, hollow-eyed, famine-stricken heroes they were, and their loyalty was perfect. I have often thought that their splendid devotion to Morelos was partly inspired by his priestly character, for it had in it an element of self-sacrifice almost religious. Upon Morelos himself nothing of this was lost; and when he saw the devotion and sufferings of his men, he was deeply moved. I watched him narrowly, and, seeing how his heart was

wrung, wondered to myself whether would triumph in his breast policy or pity, the general or the priest. It was the beginning of the third week in April when Morelos said to me, quite abruptly—

"How much longer can we hold out, think you?"

The question startled me, for in it I heard the first note of wavering resolution.

"If heaven is merciful, the rains will come in five weeks at the earliest."

"Five weeks!" and the Padre uttered a deep sigh. "In five weeks five hundred of my men will be dead—dead of hunger. And yet to give up now. It is of no use, they cannot stand it longer. And the inhabitants—Calleja——"

"Will surely be merciful, remembering what they have already gone through," I put in.

"When Calleja becomes merciful, that

mountain will sink into a plain," said the Padre, stretching out his arm and pointing solemnly to the glittering peak of Popocatepetl.

"In that case we cannot save them. They have had no voice or choice in the matter, and if Calleja is not an utter barbarian——"

"Which he is, as you well know. Still my first duty is to my troops. I think, *amigo mio*, we can hold out till the beginning of May, and then we must evacuate the place, if we can. I want you to make your way out as best you can—and may the blessed saints preserve you from capture!"

"Amen. Though I will not rely on them much."

"*Amigo mio es un herege*—my friend is a heretic," he said, smiling. He continued, "When we retreat, it will have to be by

way of the *barranca*. The battery that commands it must be destroyed. And I want you to destroy it. You will need cavalry. You must find them. By the 1st of May, I shall be ready to retire. It will be a dangerous undertaking, but I think with due caution we may escape. And I shall choose the night of the day on which you destroy the battery."

"And if I fail?"

"You will not fail, *amigo mio*. Now go and get ready to start to-night. God keep and preserve you! Our lives will be in your hands, and—I am content!"

I would have kissed his hand, but Morelos put his arm over my shoulder and embraced me as a brother; then I left him with a heavy heart, and set about my few preparations for departure, which consisted chiefly of seeing to my arms, and writing a letter to my Guenilda. For I knew that, if I fell

into the hands of the enemy, I should have but a mighty short shrift.

Crump was still with us, for though the Padre accepted his offer of service and gave him a captain's commission, he refused his offer to act as a spy, much to Crump's disgust. When he heard that I was about to leave Cuautla, he begged and implored that he might be allowed to go with me. I cannot honestly say that I cared for his company; nevertheless, his heart being so set on going, I asked Morelos to let him accompany me.

"Certainly, if you wish. Any one else you would like to take with you?" said Morelos, graciously.

Seeing that I hesitated to speak, he added, "Speak, *amigo mio*."

Then said I, "Forasmuch as there is danger ahead for me, and I know not that I shall ever return in safety; and because

you have delivered him into my hands to slay, or to let live; therefore I would like to take with me the prisoner, Don Baltasar de Tejira, and grant him his liberty when we get safely out."

Morelos answered not for some moments, but bent his head as if in thought. At length he replied—

"If you should be captured, I have in my hands none, save the Don, whom I could offer in exchange for you. When I offer to exchange him, they must accept my offer, for the Don is a great man and has powerful friends. I consider him a hostage for your safety. Wish you what is wise, *amigo mio?*"

"That I cannot say. But I have learned to like Don Baltasar exceedingly. And for myself, I would rather take the risk than leave him in captivity."

"Enough. He shall go with you," an-

swered Morelos, with one of his sweet sad smiles.

Going to the Don, I told him of his coming freedom, whereat his delight was beyond words, and he fell on my neck and wept. He was not heretofore acquainted with either war or famine, and he liked not their features on close inspection. What with insufficient food, close confinement, and the everlasting booming of cannon, his nervous system was no little disordered: questionless, this accounted for his weeping at the prospect of liberty. In a short space of time, he gathered himself together, and we discussed the situation thoroughly. Quite suddenly he remarked—

"Ah, I see, I see. No, by our Lady, I will not go! I will stay here."

I stared at him in astonishment.

"You may make eyes, my General, but it is of no use. See, we shall never get

through the lines. We shall be caught. You they will shoot in twelve hours. *Caramba*, but they shall not. I will stay here, and Morelos shall offer me in exchange for you. That will save your life, as you saved mine. Calleja refuse? *Dios mio!* he dare not. But I have another plan. Take me openly, boldly, into Calleja's camp, and I will demand a free passage for you. If he will not grant it you, I will return with you a prisoner. But Calleja refuse! *Quita!* Virey Venegas would make mince-meat of him! What say you?"

To tell truth, I rather liked this idea of the Don's, for several reasons; but I could not quite see how it could be worked in company with Crump. His changing sides after the Galeaño affair, which cost the Spaniards many lives, would assuredly cost him his life if they once got hold of him. This I explained frankly to the Don.

"Must he go with you?" he enquired.

"I think he would risk anything almost, rather than remain behind," I answered.

"Then all he has to do is to put on a bold countenance, and forget for the time that he has ceased to be a Spanish officer. Calleja will know nothing of his having become a revolutionist. You will simply go with an offering in each hand. You deliver up two notable prisoners. *Ea! vamos, ánimo!* We shall do gloriously."

At this I laughed, thinking to myself that it was not I who needed to cheer up and take courage. Morelos did not like our plan altogether, but offered no objection; which same could not be said of Crump. Going into the enemy's camp he called walking into the lion's den. He called it madness, and swore exceeding deep.

"Then remain here, where you will be safe," remarked the Don.

Whereupon Crump cursed him roundly for

his impudence, as he called it; but I noticed that Crump used his mother-tongue exclusively as the vehicle of his profanity, so the Don was none the wiser.

They who hold that belief is but a form of desire, would not have been discouraged in their opinion by the behaviour of Crump; for when he saw that our minds were made up on the subject, he began to entertain with favour Don Baltasar's opinion that his desertion to the patriots was a fact unknown to Calleja. And from looking lovingly upon the idea, he came to love it, and ended by thoroughly believing it. So it came to pass that at midnight I, in company with the Don, and Crump, who had arrayed himself in his discarded Spanish uniform, left Cuautla, and marched boldly towards the camp of Calleja. Ten minutes later we were in the hands of the Spanish guards, who marched us straight to Calleja's tent, which

was in the rear of the camp and in a well-protected position. I opine the General had gone to rest for the night, and relished not the disturbance our arrival created; for when we were shown into his presence, after nearly an hour's waiting, he received us with a sullen countenance and a sharp manner. He was dressed in full uniform, and wore a star on his breast; on a table beside him lay his unsheathed sword. It was the first time I had set eyes upon the best general the royalists had, and I took a steady look at him. I liked him not.

Calleja looked the cruel man he was. He was of moderate stature and build, with an oval face, a straight nose, and a small mouth that would have looked better had it been hidden by a thicker moustache. The two points of singularity about him were, firstly, his hair, which had no parting, and bristled straight up on the top of his head; and,

secondly, his eyes, which were dark and piercing, with a cast in the left one. Rebellious hair and gliding eye gave to him a singularly forbidding aspect, and this though he was really a good-looking man. I read in his face bad temper, pride, vanity, and cruelty: I am apt to think that history will read something of the same in his character. He gave us each a quick searching glance.

As he recognised Crump a slight expression of surprise crossed his face, which was followed by a smile, faint, but so sinister that I made sure we had reckoned wrongly on his ignorance of certain facts. He took no notice of Crump's salute, which again was ominous. Addressing the officer who had us in charge, he said sharply—

"What do they want here, and at this hour? Who are they?"

The officer turned to me, so I said—

"We come from Cuautla. I serve under Morelos. I deliver to you, conditionally, two of our prisoners."

"And yourself into the bargain, it seems. Seek you the royal *indulto?*"

I felt the blood hot in my face, as I answered, "When I seek the royal pardon, it will come from a king, not a Junta."

Of course this was the speech of a fool, under the circumstances; but Calleja's manner and words were so brutally insolent. His eyes seemed to flash fire at my words, but he only laughed softly, and, making an indifferent motion with the forefinger of his left hand, said to the captain of the guard—

"Arrest these *caballeros.* At daybreak let them be—shot! *Buenas noches, señores.*"

He bowed, folded his arms, and glared at us. I looked at Crump, and his face was white.

"He is only joking," I said to him in English.

"Calleja's jokes are deadly. The damned villain, I've a good mind to——"

At this moment we were both seized by the guards. I shook myself free, and, springing aside, drew my sword, and played it in such a manner that nobody ventured to approach me. Just then I caught Calleja's game eye, and it seemed to me of diabolical aspect.

"If he will not surrender, shoot him, the rebel dog!" hissed Calleja.

I thought this was carrying a joke too far, so I lowered my sword, and drawing a pistol pointed it straight at him. At this he recoiled a step and looked frightened, though I know that he is a brave man.

"General Calleja, I will thank you to countermand that order, to shoot me if I do not surrender. Three inches lower than

your star is your heart, and I can hit it, or my name is not General Polocino," I said.

"Polocino! *El Leon de Mejico! Válgame Dios!*" he exclaimed involuntarily.

Thus from the lips of Calleja heard I for the first time the words applied to me, THE LION OF MEXICO. Of a surety the phrase was none of his making, but was the work of the people; and though it may savour of vanity, yet is it seasoned truth that, while there may be Mexicans who have never heard of the General Polocino, there are none of that nation who are not familiar with *the Lion of Mexico.* When I heard Calleja's words, a strong thrill, thrice repeated, went through me.

Calleja countermanded his dastardly order, and so I put away my pistol. I had barely done so, when I saw him make a movement with his head to the captain of the guard; and before I could defend myself I was

seized by four or five men, and rendered powerless. Calleja's face wore a mocking look as he said—

"You thought to brave Calleja in his tent, did you, Señor Rebelde! *Nuestra Señora!* In three hours your head, stuck on a pole, shall be visible to all your friends in Cuautla de Amilpas, or my name is not General Calleja."

I was about to hurl some piece of defiance or other in his face, when the Don made me a gesture of silence. I confess that the Don had disappointed me deeply; he had simply stood quietly by, a prisoner, without opening his mouth. This ill accorded with the part he was to play—to wit, the great man demanding safe-conduct for his deliverer. I thought it was another case of exaggerated self-importance; but as he, like Crump and myself, was under sentence of death, I judged that his punishment was quite suf-

ficient, without any reproach from me. When, however, Calleja promised me a pole for my head, I saw the Don's face flush, and his eyes looked unwontedly fierce; for he was a mild, gentle-hearted, sweet-souled creature. His voice had a slight tremor in it, as he spake up and said—

"General Calleja will allow his humble, his devoted, his most obedient servant to speak a few words?"

This, even from Spaniard to Spaniard, sounded to me unnecessarily polite and deferential, and made me wish to kick the Don.

Said Calleja, haughtily—"Let your words be few, señor."

Continued the Don—"They shall be few, Señor General. His Excellency the General Polocino agreed——"

"*El Excelentisimo Señor General* Polocino! *Quita! Bufon!*" hissed Calleja, en-

raged at the complimentary manner in which the Don referred to me; which I thought was very handsome in the Don, and it raised him some points in my estimation.

Continued the Don—"As I was saying when your Grace interrupted me, General Polocino agreed to deliver me, a loyal Spaniard, and Captain Crumpo, one of your own officers, safely into your hands. And I, on my part, did promise that General Polocino should be allowed to pass free and unmolested out of your camp, in company with this other gentleman, who is a fellow-countryman of the General, and his friend. Failing to make good my word, I pledged my honour to return a prisoner to Cuautla."

Said Calleja, impatiently—"Well, sir, and what have I to do with your agreements and your promises?"

"Respect them, Señor General," answered

my Don, with a dignity and a directness that won my heart.

"You are insolent, fellow. Be off!" cried Calleja, angrily.

"What have I, a loyal Spaniard, done that I should be shot like a bandit? And this officer of yours? And his Excellency, the General Polocino?" demanded the Don, pluckily.

He seemed to delight in dangling my new and ceremonious dignity before Calleja, as a bandarillo waves his red flag in front of a bull.

"I judge of a man from the company he keeps. You are beyond doubt either a spy or a—traitor," said Calleja bitterly, and as he spoke the word traitor he looked contemptuously at Crump. "Remove them," added Calleja to the officer in charge.

"Señor General, would your Excellency deign to receive the name of his most

humble, his most faithful servant, whom his Excellency has ordered to be shot at daybreak like a dog?"

There was such a proud mockery in my Don's voice and words now, that Calleja stared hard at him.

"I know you not, sir," he said, haughtily.

"Quite so. Yet the Virey Venegas, your master, Señor General, knows me. I am Don Baltasar de Tejira. Ah! I see my name is known to you."

I never saw a greater change come over a man in my life than came over Calleja. As the Don spoke his name, Calleja flushed crimson, and coming a step nearer to the Don, scanned his features closely. Suddenly, every vestige of colour fled his face, he fell back a couple of paces, and throwing up his hands, exclaimed—

"My God! I must have been blind. Horrible! horrible!"

Said the Don, quietly—"Now, General Calleja, you may shoot me, and these my two friends, if you—dare! *Buenas noches, Señor General.*" And turning to our guard, he signified his readiness to leave. But Calleja advanced quickly, ordered the soldiers to let go their hold of us, and to retire immediately, which they did. Then to the Don, he said, with some emotion—

"Señor Don, forgive me, I implore you. If you do not, Venegas never will. On my honour, I knew you not. See, the light is wretchedly dim, and you stood there in the shade. Moreover, though I had heard you were captured on your way to Llanos, I never dreamed you were a prisoner of Morelos. I am covered with confusion, Señor Don."

"Still your conduct, General, is inexcusable. A peon deserved better treatment than I, a Spaniard, received at your hands.

Is not this gentleman, also, one of your officers?" said the Don, severely.

Answered Calleja—"I understood that the Captain had deserted and gone over to the rebels. Is that so, Señor Capitan?"

Answered Crump, readily—"No, it is——"

But the Don interrupted him with—

"The Captain has my consent for what he has done. He came to the country to seek out my friend, his Excellency the General Polocino. Granted he found the General on the wrong side, but so strong was his friendship for him that the Captain wishes to remain with the General. And in the order of precedence, it is for the captain to follow the general, not the general the captain."

This piece of comedy I enjoyed hugely, and so I think did the Don, though he went through it with perfect gravity, and a beautiful absence of self-consciousness. Nor did

Calleja venture to spoil the sport by any incongruous display of dissatisfaction with the argument. On the contrary, with great satisfaction and earnestness he answered—

"Enough, Señor Don, enough. I am delighted to recognize the claims of noble friendship. Have I your forgiveness, Don Baltasar? Your friends are at liberty to depart when and where they list."

Responded the Don, fervently—"Señor General, I put aside all memory of any unpleasantness; I embrace you!" And they embraced.

A little before daybreak, not wishing that the direction in which we travelled should be known, Crump and I bade the Don farewell, and left the camp afoot.

CHAPTER IX.

A CLOSE SHAVE.

We set off eastward, as though our destination had been Zacualpam Amilpas, but in a short time we altered our course to a north-westerly direction; and in a few hours, after passing numerous fine sugar *haciendas*, each of which boasted a church with dome and tower, we sighted Yautepec embowered in groves of orange and lemon. We decided not to enter the town, so we left it half a league to the right, and struck out for the hills beyond. Early in the afternoon, being then among the mountains, and the heat of the sun oppressive,

we lighted upon an Indian palmetto-thatched hut. Though the abode of poverty, it was nevertheless gay and odorous with flowers of every hue; for the Aztec Indians are great lovers of flowers, which formerly were the exquisite emblems of their simple faith.

Entering, we found the floor to consist of the bare earth, hard-trodden; a rude couch, formed of four posts driven into the earth and crossed with pieces of timber, constituted the bed. Two crazy chairs, a few unglazed pots and pitchers, some gourd-shell cups and dippers, some metal spoons, an earthen vessel in which to burn charcoal, the all-important *comal*, or earthen frying-pan,—these were all the articles of housekeeping that met the eye, with one exception. This was a simple yet curious structure of nothing but mere sticks, and its use would form a puzzle to the eyes of most of my countrymen.

I have somewhere read that the word *wife* meaneth *the weaver*, and, if that be so, then do the Indian women sustain to this day the chief function of the wives of the Long Ago. For they be all weavers, and this singular fabric of sticks was nothing less than a loom. This we saw at a glance, for the goodwife was busy weaving fabrics for the family, out of the coarse fibres of the *maguey* leaf, while the long sharp point and the fibrous threads of the same leaf, supplied her at once with both needle and cotton. We were both sore tired and passing hungry, but the woman seemed chary of hospitality. We asked for water.

"*No hay.* There is none," she answered.

For pulque. "*No hay.*"

For fruit. "*No hay.*"

For tortillas. "*No hay—no hay—no hay! Nada! nada! señores!*"

So we went out disconsolate, and sat down

hard by under the shadow of some palms, and took what comfort we could in our *cigarros*. In a few minutes the Indian woman came to the entrance of the *jacal*, and looked at us; this she did thrice at intervals of ten or fifteen minutes.

At length she brought a pitcher of water, which she set down beside us, and retired. Presently she reappeared, and this time she stood before us the real lady—*the giver of bread*. She brought us something, and enough, of all her stock and store—to wit, tortillas, which are a kind of maize pancake, *frijoles* or purple beans, a small lump of *tasajo* or sun-dried beef, lemons, and sugar. And lo! she, who had appeared ill-favoured in our eyes, grew into a beautiful bountiful creature, so welcome to us were her gifts. Thus we ate and were thankful, and I left a little store of silver in her hut, which made her cover her eyes with silent astonishment.

For several hours we pursued our way through the mountain pass, which was narrow, rough, and rocky; we climbed steep precipices, descended deep defiles, and crossed narrow sharp ledges of rock, with terrible ravines below us; cacti and thorny bushes frequently obstructed our path, and threatened to destroy our clothes.

We came at length to a natural clearing, surrounded with dense forest. In the centre were some large loose rocks, and a large beech-tree that threw a most grateful shade; here we sat down to rest, close beside a wooden cross, similar to ten or a dozen others which we had passed on our way. These crosses are of frequent occurrence especially among the mountains, and are sinister landmarks to the traveller; for it is a custom of the country to place a cross over a body that has been found dead, whether in field or road. Also, it may be almost said to be

a custom of the country, for travellers to die mysteriously on the road. Sitting with my back against a rock, I fell asleep. I suppose I had been sleeping a full half-hour when suddenly I opened my eyes, and I caught the gleam of a gun-barrel protruding from a bush, that stood in the thick forest in front of me. It was instinct that told me to drop flat, and as I did so there was a sharp report, and a bullet flattened itself against the rock above me, at a point where a moment sooner it would have pierced my heart. As I sprang to my feet and drew my pistol, another shot was fired close by in the wood, but in an opposite direction, followed by a noise of some one running away.

I looked round for Crump, but he had disappeared, and though I called him loudly, he made no answer. I heard two more shots fired at some distance away, and then all was quiet. While I stood revolving the matter

in my mind, Crump came dashing out of the forest all a-sweat.

"By Jove! old man," he cried, "that was a close shave, the villains! Are you hurt at all?"

"No; but as you say, it was a close shave. Where have you been? What does it all mean?" I said, perhaps a little sharply; for I was angry with myself for having conceived a horrible suspicion on the spur of the moment.

Before we left the camp of Calleja, Crump exchanged his military dress for a civilian suit, which included a wide-flowing dark-blue cloak, and a sombrero of yellow vicuna cloth, trimmed with gold-lace; he carried also a short carbine, which he could conceal under his cloak.

Now, at the same moment that I caught the gleam of the gun-barrel in the bush, I also saw, or thought I saw, a streak of yel-

low, not unlike the colour of Crump's sombrero. Crump looked hard at me, as if trying to read my thoughts. Then he said—

"I thought I heard something moving in there, and taking a hint from this cross, I thought I might as well be on my guard. So I got up and went into the wood at the back there, and crept quietly round to the front here. Just then they fired at you, and seeing me they ran. There were two of them, rough-looking fellows. I followed them some distance, and fired at them; but they got away. I thought I should get lost, so I came back to see how you were getting on."

Such was Crump's story, and I am bound to admit it was probable enough. He added that, seeing the bandits were about to shoot, he made a loud noise, which awoke me and saved my life. He met my eyes so frankly, and manifested such delight at my escape,

that I felt myself a base wretch in having harboured for a moment the ghastly suspicion, that Crump had made a deliberate attempt on my life. We thought it time to push on, and this we did.

Towards evening we descended into a ravine, which led us into a rich valley, highly cultivated, and evidently forming part of a large estate, seeing that there were no signs of any *rancho*, *pueblo*, or *hacienda* being near. Just as it began to grow dark, and when we were beginning to think we should have to camp out all night, we overtook a peon driving a couple of asses bearing pulque in hog-skins. To all our questions he had but one answer: *Quien sabe?*—who knows? Nevertheless, by dint of patience, tact, good words, and a few *cigaritas*, we succeeded in extracting from him the information that, within a league, was the *hacienda* Arroyo Amarillo. We uttered our

thanks and pressed forward, hoping to reach the *hacienda* ere it was quite dark.

In about a mile we came to a narrow fissure in the ground, over which we could easily have jumped; but the road, which was now little else than a mule-track, suddenly branched to the left and followed the line of cleavage. Our only hope was in keeping to the road, and this we did. As we advanced, the rent in the earth grew deeper and deeper, the sides farther and farther apart, until in a few minutes we found ourselves on the edge of a yawning gulf, that seemed to delve into the bowels of the earth. The moon was just above the horizon, and its yellow light made the blackness of the abyss look hideous.

There are many singular things in Mexico, but none more singular, to my thinking, than these ever-recurring *barrancas*, running for miles into the earth, yet giving one so little warning of their presence that the tra-

veller is ofttimes on the brink, before he is aware of its existence. We came to a sudden halt, as the narrow road we were following made a sharp curve, and dipped right down into the blackness. It looked like an invitation to enter Hades.

I hope I am not a coward, but there be things on earth, unattached to the supernatural, which are calculated to inspire terror in the soul of man. And among these things I count a Mexican *barranca* in the light of the rising moon. We stood there for a full half-hour irresolute, screwing our courage to the sticking-point. Then we entered the *barranca*. Three hours later we gained the top on the other side; and I prayed heaven I might never again have to cross a similar place under similar circumstances. All the same, I have been in a worse place under worse circumstances; and so I count my prayer answered, with a difference.

Soon after we emerged from the *barranca* we struck a good broad road—that is to say, it was a good road for a country wherein all the roads are bad. The moon was high in the heavens now, and our hearts lost no little of their heaviness, and our limbs their weariness, as we made a turn in the road and saw close to us the *hacienda* Arroyo Amarillo or Yellow Brook.

It was a large white-plastered stone structure, protected on the windy side by a long row of the *Organos cacti*, whose fluted stems shot up full twenty feet, their sharp spines and firm limbs forming an excellent barrier against intruders; their tops were loaded with beautiful blossoms. We passed through some heavy open gates, and under a thick low archway, into a large central court, lined on two sides with corridors and stone arches, that gave to the place the look of a monastery. The other part of the courtyard formed

an immense range of stables and other buildings. Passing along one of the corridors, we entered the public room, which was a vaulted apartment of great size.

This vast hall was a very babel of noise, and through the medium of tobacco-smoke, which seemed to form the only atmosphere, we beheld a crowd of men. It was a motley assortment of travellers, traders, *rancheros*, *arrieros*, or mule-drivers, military men, servants, and some who had the appearance of brigands, though in reality they were coffee-planters, and owners of silver-mines. Seated at tables, standing, moving to and fro, they were talking, eating, drinking, smoking, rattling dice, shuffling cards; a Spanish officer was amusing his friends with what seemed to be an exhibition of amateur juggling, while in another corner of the room a facetious muleteer was rendering a comic song in a capital baritone.

We seated ourselves at a small table, at which was sitting a quiet-seeming man of the *vaquero* or small-farmer class, engaged with a huge *cigarro* and his own thoughts. He glanced at both of us in an absent-minded way, gave us a conventional greeting, and relapsed into his former attitude.

Having satisfied our hunger, we began to smoke and to watch the scene. In a few moments my attention was drawn to an adjoining table, where sat four men, of whom two were Spanish officers, one a merchant, and the fourth a *ranchero*. They were all four talking volubly, but the *ranchero* loudest and fastest of the lot. He was a fine, hardy, weather-worn, bold-looking man, dressed in leather trousers and jerkin; his silver-corded sombrero lay on the top of his *sarape* on the floor; in his belt was stuck a *macheta* or poniard and a pistol, and when

he stretched out his legs, the long rowels of his spurs shone like daggers.

He was discussing the revolution fearlessly, but, as it happened, his opinions were safe ones under the circumstances, for he proclaimed himself a royalist in a loud voice. Upon the revolutionary leaders, one and all, he showered an abuse that amused me, particularly when he named, with a great oath of contempt, the "foreign dog," the Lion of Mexico. After spitting on my name and fame, he fell foul of Morelos. This angered me. I know not whether or how I showed it, for certain am I that I neither spake nor moved, though perhaps my face mirrored my anger. Be this as it may, in the middle of his vile tirade against the Padre, our eyes happened to meet. We were not more than six feet apart. Eying me steadily for some seconds, he nodded to me, and lifting his glass of *mescal* from the table, shouted out—

"Drink with me, Señor Don, to the perdition of the rebel Morelos!"

I turned away my glance, and pretended not to notice him.

"*Cuidado!* beware! Drink, señor, and be wise," I heard a voice whisper.

It was the meditative man at our table who was speaking, but he kept his eyes on the ground all the time. Shouted the *ranchero* a second time—

"Drink, Señor Don, or by the holy saints I will throw my glass in your face!"

Then I looked the half-drunken bravo in the face, and said—"Will you?"

"*Cuidado! chito!*" whispered the same voice.

"By our Lady, will I!" answered the *ranchero*, with a contemptuous laugh.

He rose to his feet and raised his glass. As I sprang at him, the glass struck me on the shoulder and shivered in a hundred pieces. In another moment I had planted

my fist full in his left eye, so that he fell sprawling on the floor. Spaniards and Mexicans do not know how to use their fists, but fall back instinctively on dagger or pistol; therefore, when the enemy went down before my fist, there was dead silence in the room by the space of some seconds.

Then they began to say—"*Es Americano.* He is an American."

"No, *caballeros*," answered I, proudly, "*Yo soy Inglés.* I am an Englishman."

Just then the enemy arose, and made an attempt to draw his pistol. Instantly there was a frightful hubbub, and in the hurly the meditative man, with the assistance of others, persuaded the enemy to forego slaughtering me on the spot, and led him to the far end of the room to cool off. In a little while came the meditative man back to his seat at our table, and, lighting another monstrous *cigarro*, began to reflect.

Addressing him, I said, "Is the gentleman a friend of yours?"

The *vaquero* looked up quickly, smiled, and answered, "Oh yes; we live near to each other. He has drunk too much *aguardiente;* therein he is a fool."

"Why did he try to bully me?" I enquired.

"He was reviling Morelos," answered the *vaquero.*

"I do not see the point," I said.

"Because, Señor Don, there was no mirror in front of you. Your face wore an angry look, and your brow was folded."

"Indeed! Then when the gentleman talks, whoso is in front of him must listen, agree, smile, or get a glass of *mescal* in his face! Not a bad royalist, I think," I said, somewhat imprudently.

The *vaquero* looked me steadily in the face, as he replied, "Quite so, Señor Don.

He is not a bad royalist when he is—drunk."

"Is he always drunk?" I asked, laughing.

"No, not often."

"And when he is sober?"

"Then he is a good revolutionist."

"Oh, then, when the wine is in——"

"The wit is out. Precisely so, señor. Reason filters along the channels of sobriety. Drunk, for the king; sober, for God and liberty."

"Why did you warn me to take care?"

"Because accidents will happen."

"Well, I give you my thanks, sir. May I ask the name of your friend, my enemy?"

He hesitated a moment, then he said, "Yes, I think so. He is the Señor Don Ciriacco Zela."

"Ciriacco Zela!" I exclaimed, "the famous robber-chief?"

The *vaquero* nodded assent, and laughed softly.

"And you are his friend?"

"Most truly said, Señor Don; I am his friend. My name is Porferio Gomez."

"Of Perote and the Pinal?" I asked, almost breathless with amazement.

"*Si, señor*," he answered, smiling.

Now Ciriacco Zela was bad enough, but Porferio Gomez was a name of terror. He was and is the most redoubtable bandit in Mexico.

CHAPTER X.

A BORROWED MOUNT.

Señor Don Porferio Gomez, though a daring bandit and a bloodthirsty scoundrel, was in his private capacity, so to speak, a mild meditative man, fairly well educated, and an intense lover of those wild mountain regions which he so often desecrated with the blood of his victims. I had half an hour's very agreeable conversation with him, during which I picked up considerable information, political and military. He seemed a little curious to know who I was, but I put him off with indirect answers. I was extremely anxious to learn the whereabouts

of the active and gallant Padre, Matamoros, who had tried so bravely and so fruitlessly to relieve us in Cuautla. Gomez had seen him within the last three or four days, and from him I gathered that I should find Matamoros in the neighbourhood of San Mateo, a village at the foot of the mountains, some ten leagues eastward.

After some time I proposed to Crump to go outside, and get a breath of fresh air. As we rose, Gomez did the same, remarking that he would go and see how the horses did. Together we made our way to the stables, where from thirty to forty horses and mules were munching their provender. I looked at them with envious eyes, for I had great need of a horse, but I had not money to expend on one, and Crump was in the same plight. At length we came to two horses standing side by side, with their saddles still on; the one was a bright bay,

and the other a coal-black, and both were mares. Splendid creatures they were, by all odds the finest in the stables. The bay belonged to Zela, and the black to Gomez.

"Take care, sir, take care! La Negrilla likes not a strange hand," cried Gomez, as I advanced to stroke his mare.

The animal did lay its ears flat, open its mouth, and snort angrily; but not on that account did I draw back, with an affectation of alarm that brought a low laugh from Gomez.

Said Crump in Spanish: "Well, I did not think there was a horse living that you——"

"Would care to mount, eh? That is, so long as I could foot it. Still I like to pat them," I put in, quickly.

At which Crump laughed, and said in English, "What is the game now, I wonder?"

To which I replied, in Spanish, "When I am tired of the *litera* (palanquin), I will try an ass."

When we left the stables, Gomez returned to the public room, but Crump and I strolled out through the gates on to the road. A short distance from the *hacienda* we came to the brook that gave it its name, and here under some lofty palms we halted.

"The sooner we leave here the better. I propose that we push on to Matamoros to-night," I said.

"But he is ten leagues away. And I am about done up already. The living at Cuautla was not very strengthening," answered Crump.

"I am of the same opinion; but we must go forward, by hook or by crook. Morelos, I know well, is counting the hours till he hears from us. Say, Crump, is it always robbery to steal?"

"What are you driving at?" he enquired.

"Is it robbery to rob a robber?"

"That depends upon whether you are caught at it or not. But we have had enough of robbers for one night, I'm thinking. Jove! to think that mild country-looking bumpkin of a fellow is such a cut-throat."

"Did you notice his eyes, though?"

"Can't say that I did, specially. Seems to me he kept them mostly on the ground."

"I did, though. He fastened them on me several times—once when I evaded his polite enquiry as to my name—and I felt their power. They are dark terrible eyes, and in them lies the secret of his command over his wild followers. We need horses, Crump."

"What! No, you dare not!" he exclaimed, as he suddenly divined my thought.

"I dare. Dare you?"

After a momentary hesitation, he answered, "Yes, if you will ride the black devil."

"Agreed," I answered, gladly, for La Negrilla had taken my fancy hugely.

"When are we to do it?" asked Crump.

"The sooner the better. Now's the time," I answered.

Without another word, we returned and entered the stables. There were several men moving about, attending to their own cattle, and they paid no attention to us. The bay was a sweet-tempered animal, and Crump had no difficulty, to speak of, in putting the bridle on her. But La Negrilla, though she had a gallant heart, was of wicked temper with strangers. It was a sight to see her, in the dim light of a stable lanthorn, with her head down, her mouth wide open, kicking like a mad thing.

I suppose it is a kind of natural gift I

have, but certain it is I never saw the horse that would not come at my call, or become docile at the sound of my voice. This I account no little of a mystery, and one that passes my wit to comprehend; though I have known men with like power over dogs; and at Poloc there is, or leastways was this time seven years ago, a shepherd named Daniel Frubbusher who could make strange sheep and cows follow him whithersoever he would, like dogs.

I spoke softly to La Negrilla in her native tongue, praised her great beauty, and whispered my love of her. This for the space of two minutes, when her ladyship, true to her sweet sex, yielded to flattery what she had denied to force, and became as gentle as a lamb. We mounted in the stable, crossed the courtyard, passed under the low entrance-arch and through the massive open gates, walked our horses lei-

surely for a few hundred yards, and then we put them to the gallop and rode as hard as we could.

For full three leagues we rode without once drawing rein; I had neither whip nor spur, and needed none, for so generous and gallant was La Negrilla that she responded to my voice every time, with a snort of pleasure and a burst of speed. I suppose we did a very wrong thing in taking French leave with the robbers' horses, and I recollect how there flashed through my mind the image of the kitchen at the "Bull i' th' Thorn," half-filled with Reevers. And I frankly confess that my conscience troubled me as little as, I judge, it troubled Dick o' th' Border, or Captain Silas himself.

After passing through a gloomy defile, we came unexpectedly to a small river with a broken rocky channel, that churned the water into foam. There was no bridge or

ferry, so we dismounted and sought for a ford. The moon being much obscured with clouds, and the river lying in the dark shadow of the mountain through which we had just ridden, we were some little time in discovering the only spot that was fordable. I had remained behind for perhaps a minute, and as I came up to the horses, Crump came round from the farther side of La Negrilla, and mounted. I followed suit, Crump leading the way to the ford. His bay had apparently no fear of water, but La Negrilla snorted, and grew restless. Under the circumstances, it seemed best for the bay to go first, but to this Crump demurred.

"All right," I said, "she has got to cross, so she might as well go first as last."

But just as I was encouraging La Negrilla to enter the water, Crump changed his mind, and said he would lead the way. This he

did, I following close behind. The passage was pretty deep, the water coming so high as the horses' bellies; to avoid wetting my feet, I removed them from the stirrups and held them up. I was in the middle of the stream where the current was exceeding powerful, when of a sudden I heard Crump give an exclamation, and the next moment there was a bright flash, and a loud report as he fired his carbine. La Negrilla, rendered timid by the flood, gave a mighty bound and fell over into deep water; while at the same time her girths suddenly and mysteriously gave way.

The first thing I realized was that I was drifting rapidly down-stream, with something dragging at my left arm that threatened to drown me. This I found to be nothing other than La Negrilla's saddle, which was attached to me by means of the *lazo* that hung at its pommel, and in which I had become

entangled. Luckily, I was a good swimmer —I doubt if Crump knew that,—and this gave me confidence in a perilous position. The channel was deep, the current strong, while the abounding rocks fretted and tore the water exceedingly. It was with great effort I got to land, which I did with my hands bleeding and my body sorely bruised; and I brought my saddle with me. I landed about three hundred yards below the ford, and when I shouted for Crump he came on foot, and seemed equally surprised and pleased at my safe deliverance.

"You've got the lives of a cat, old man," he remarked jocularly.

I asked why he had fired, and he answered that he had seen a beast of prey—a panther or jaguar—crouching on the bank ready to spring on him. That he was lying, there seemed no sufficient reason to suppose; for many savage beasts sheltered themselves in

the thick mountain forests. I did not doubt him in the least.

"But I don't understand," said he, "how the deuce this saddle came off. There must have been something wrong with the girths."

These he examined carefully, while I was taking thought for my bruises.

Presently he cried out, "Look here, old man! what's that?"

"It looks very much like a cut, don't you think?" I answered, as he showed me where the girth-straps had parted.

At this point, suspicion crept into my mind. I examined the cuts—there were two of them—narrowly; they were, of course, wet, and somehow or other had got some mud upon them, though otherwise the saddle was clean. Anyway, the cuts did not look fresh ones; and it seemed improbable that Crump would have drawn attention to the cuts, had he made them himself. I concluded that my

suspicion was a foul one; moreover, I did soundly rate myself for my double-face, in pretending that I had forgiven Crump, when evidently I had not in my heart of hearts. So I thrust the terrible suspicion neck and crop out of mind, and treated the incident as a bit of mere adventure.

We reached San Mateo about daybreak, but Matamoros was not there, nor did we come up with him till towards evening. He was delighted to see us, and, in a confidential conversation I had with him, he promised to lend me a score of his best men. He had got together a band of nearly two hundred men, mostly Creoles, well mounted and armed, who had already done some good fighting. As it happened, when I arrived he had just received intelligence of the advance of a body of the enemy's troops, numbering some two hundred and fifty. Matamoros determined to give battle, and

though I felt that I had other and more important work to do than bear a hand in the affair, I was anything but ill-pleased at the prospect of seeing how the patriots could fight elsewhere than at Cuautla.

I will now give a true description of the battle that ensued, an account of which was afterwards published in the official Gazette at the capital, wherein it was proclaimed that a bloody and obstinate combat (*una batalla sangrienta y obstinada*) had been fought, and a glorious victory over the rebels gained. It was on the second morning after my arrival. The patriots, numbering one hundred and ninety-three men and officers, were drawn up in a plain, with wooded hills behind them. In front of them, at a distance of some three hundred yards, was a long straggling hill that cut the plain in two. On the other side of this hill, in the plain below, was the enemy, about two hundred and fifty strong,

under command of Don Caetano Quintero, an officer who had boasted in his despatches that he gave no quarter to man, woman, or child. Matamoros did not lead his men personally, but gave the command to his lieutenant, a creole named Acheve.

Precisely at ten o'clock the order was given to advance, and the men marched forward, and were soon ascending the hill that divided them from the enemy. The intention was to gain the summit of the hill unperceived, and then rush down upon the enemy and put him to flight. I had climbed the wooded hill at the back of our position, and was seated on a rock that overlooked the hill in the plain. Crump was with me; we were smoking, discussing the impending action, and watching our men as they climbed the hill in good order. Now, as luck would have it, precisely at ten o'clock the enemy, unknown to us, began to climb

his side of the hill, with the same admirable intention of getting to the top unperceived, rushing down upon us, and putting us to flight. The result, as may be imagined, was a surprise on both sides.

Just as our men gained the summit, the enemy did the same. Both parties, I can well believe, felt themselves ridiculous, which perhaps accounted for their sudden determination to act as they felt. They stood staring at each other for half a minute, then they exchanged one fire, after which, moved by a common impulse, they turned tail and ran back for their lives. Half-way down the hill, it occurred to Lieutenant Acheve to turn his head and see if the enemy was really pursuing. As there was no enemy in sight, this gallant officer had the courage to rally his men and reascend the hill, whence he beheld the enemy gain his camp in safety, blown like a racer. Whereupon Acheve

planted his flag proudly on the summit, and claimed the victory, on the ground that he held the field. This was Quintero's *batalla sangrienta y obstinada!* Three hours later I left our friends, and did not take with me the promised score of Creoles. I thought I could do without them; for to my thinking a dozen of my brave blacks were worth a hundred of such sham warriors.

CHAPTER XI.

GUERRILLAS.

TOWARDS evening we halted in a small village in which there was no *meson*, or inn; but the alcalde of the place was a dignified Indian, dressed in a white cotton shirt, and a pair of old cotton pantaloons that reached a little lower than the calves of his legs, and bearing in his hand a silver wand, as an emblem of office. The same showed us no little kindness; he invited us to his house, which consisted of one room built of stakes, filled in with pieces of timber and covered with bark, while the roof was formed of the broad leaves of the

maguey plant. This primitive abode of magisterial dignity was in no sense mean or squalid, but rather was it a piece of beauty, seeming to the eye a natural growth, much more than a building. It stood beside a small grove of palms, whose tops were crowned with plumes of great white blossoms. Of a truth, "nothing appeared more than Nature itselfe, without Art; who confusedly had brought foorth Roses abundantly, wilde, but odoriferous, and to sense very comfortable."

Tropical flowers of every hue, and sweet-smelling, abounded on all sides; and gay-coloured birds, some having melodious song, flitted in and out among the flowers and big cacti, rich with blossoms. At night the air was ladened with a million perfumes, and the moon shed its magic light over mountains and valleys. From the doorway of the hut, one could see the setting sun strike

into splendour the mighty crown of Popocatepetl, and robe the gigantic figure of *la Muger Blanca* — the White Woman — in a shroud of glorious colours.

Our host, whose name I forget, was a small thin well-built man of about sixty, very muscular, with a skin as dark as a gipsy's, and dark black eyes and hair; he was a bachelor, and lived entirely alone. Having placed his hut at our disposal with a grace that was worthy of a prince, he proceeded to light a fire on the floor in the middle of the room, and in a very short time he had set out for us a meal which consisted of *arepa* or bread, *frijoles*, some *tasajo* or sun-dried beef, and a *jambalaya* of stewed rice and gravy, with hot pepper-pods on it. This was very savoury, and hit our palates finely, as did also the splendid fruits, which ended the repast. He gave us for drink a liquid called *Colorado*, which

I had never before tasted, and found not over-agreeable.

On the outskirts of this village, within three hundred *varas* of the alcalde's *jacal*, there was a *teocalli* or ancient Aztec temple. It stood in the midst of a wilderness of tropical growths, a solid mound about forty feet high, of pyramidal form. The sides were now grass-covered, and wild flowers —aloes, *nopals*, *mesquite*—climbed up it in every direction. The steep flight of stone steps which led to the platform on the top, was much worn and broken. On the summit of the mound there had once stood a dark pagan temple, wherein was placed an image of the god; but the temple was now little more than a heap of stones. There it stood, as it had stood for ages, the ruined witness of a national life and a national faith that had for centuries been things of the far past. I came upon this

memorial of bygone days quite unexpectedly, as I was taking a stroll all alone in the evening. In the soft moonlight, it struck my fancy powerfully; the scene was so strange, so beautiful, and touched withal with solemn mystery and sadness: it is a land of solemn beauty, mystery, and sadness.

I sat down, lighted a *cigarro*, and gave myself up to the spirit of the place and time. I had sat, I know not how long, but the light of the moon had declined, and left the *teocalli* in the shade. All at once I heard a light footstep in the tangled wilderness, and I instinctively concealed my *cigarro*, and moved under the shelter of some large bushes hard by. The footsteps came nearer and nearer, and presently, from out the thick growth of the wilderness, emerged the figure of the alcalde. For a moment I thought he must have come in search of me, seeing him

glance round quickly as if looking for some one. The next moment, however, he crossed the small clearing and began to ascend the face of the pyramid with, what seemed to me, a marvellous agility. Reaching the summit, he stood for some moments with his hands extended to the west, then he moved forward, and was lost to sight. My curiosity to know what the old Indian was doing up there, was strong enough to tempt me to try the ascent. I found it stiff work, and once or twice came near falling down headlong: where the alcalde was a monkey, I was a bear; so true is the saying that practice makes perfect.

At length I reached the top, and looked all round for the alcalde. He was nowhere to be seen. I approached the mass of ruined stonework that was once the temple, and, walking round it, I beheld on the north side a small opening, large enough to admit a

man, perhaps, crawling. Straightway I went down on my hands and knees, and thrust my head inside the opening. I saw nothing but thick darkness. I felt with my hands, and found that there was a sort of passage, which I entered with some little difficulty, as it was very narrow. I crawled slowly along some ten or twelve feet, when I struck my head against a stone, and, putting out my hand, it came against a mass of rough stones. By feeling all about, I discovered that I had passed an opening to the left, which was now opposite my hips. It was too narrow a passage to turn in, so I backed until I came to the opening, into which I crawled. This was a little wider than the other, but equally dark. A couple of yards brought me to another passage, which I had no sooner penetrated into than I saw a faint light ahead.

At this moment an uncanny feeling crept

over me, and I wished myself back in the open air. But still my curiosity was stronger than my fear, or my superstition, if superstition or fear it was, so that I crept noiselessly forward. The narrow passage widened out; I stood up, and entered through an ancient doorway into a small six-sided room, supported by two enormously thick square pillars. Behind one of these I took my stand, and watched what occurred. There were antique sculptures on the walls, of a Yonic and Lingaic character, boldly chiselled: I doubt not there was much there that did not meet my eye, for my attention was riveted upon the far end of the room.

In a socket in the wall was stuck a lighted torch, which threw a flickering light on to a huge chair of transparent onyx, on which there stood a stone figure in a sitting posture. The image was about two feet high, covered with quaint carvings in yellow, blue,

and vermilion. I took it to be a representation of Coatlicue, the Mexican Flora, or of Centeotl, the Mexican Ceres; but I do not know for certain. From under his *sarape*, the alcalde drew forth a bunch of splendid yellow and purple blossoms, which he reverently deposited in the lap of the goddess; then he bowed his head until he touched the ground in front of the idol, and remained, as if in prayer, for the space of three or four minutes. Then he arose, and, carefully collecting every flower that he had offered, he suddenly seized and extinguished the torch. The darkness was absolute.

From his movements as I heard them, it struck me that the alcalde was concealing the torch; thus, if by chance one lighted on the spot, there was no trace left of the use it was being put to. I tried hard to be patient, and give the idolatrous old Aztec ten minutes' grace, before I started

to leave; but I liked not the place, and was glad to get out of it. This took me longer than I thought for, and when I reached the point of egress I found the cautious old scamp had covered it up, with a number of large loose stones. These I removed, and afterwards replaced, not wishing to give away the alcalde's secret, seeing that he was our very good friend.

To descend the *teocalli* was no easy matter, save the last dozen feet or so, which I did head over heels. I came by no damage, however, and picking myself up I walked slowly, and in a roundabout way, to our *jacal*, powerfully impressed by what I, with my own eyes, had seen that night. I had seen a native Mexican worshipping one of his ancient deities. Yet for wellnigh three hundred years, the native idolatry has been esteemed dead, and Christianity has been the established religion. Yet here was a native

alcalde, or local magistrate,—a regular attendant on all the services of the Roman Catholic Church of the *pueblo*, the right-hand man of the *cura*, wearing suspended from the neck a medal-like image of the Virgin of Guadaloupe,—a worshipper by stealth at the ruined shrine of the gods of his forefathers. This gave me some food for reflection. Also, it threw a strange, startling light on the inner secret life of this oppressed, melancholy, and taciturn people.

When I reached the alcalde's hut, the old gentleman, with an easy conscience, was discoursing with Crump; he had not the smallest suspicion that I knew enough to have sent him to the Inquisition. I was sorely tempted to have a confidential talk with him, to try and learn something more of the secret and mystery of his faith; but I concluded that it was safer to let sleeping dogs lie. It was late when Crump and I

betook ourselves to the raised couch, fixed in the ground, which served as our bed; the alcalde wrapped himself up in a blanket, and laid him down with dignity on the earth floor of the *jacal*. I do not think I had been asleep more than two hours, when the alcalde awoke me, saying—

"Get up, señor. You must fly. Come, I will show you a way out. You can gain the *chapparal* in three minutes, and you are safe. Listen!"

Some one was knocking outside, and calling for the alcalde to show himself.

"They are cavalry, royalists, ten, twenty, thirty, by the Virgin, I know not how many! Fly, *caballeros!*" whispered the alcalde, in a terrible fright.

Then I saw that, though the old man had carefully eschewed the subject of the war overnight, he had guessed something of our character, and that his sympathy—as when

did it not, with these Indians?—went with the patriots.

"You are a friend, I see, and I thank you. Show me where I can get a look at these men. Meanwhile, speak to them, or they will pull the place down."

He led me quickly to a spot in the wall, and, lifting some mats of leaves, showed me an aperture through which I could see the road in front. Then he began to call out, like one roused from deep slumber; while I gave all my attention to the gentry outside. There were some twenty of them, gaily caparisoned horsemen with broad sombreros, embroidered jackets, decorated leggings, massive spurs; armed were they with muskets, swords, and lances with fluttering pennons. Full in the broad moonlight they stood, and a very pretty scene they made.

"Some of Calleja's devils, are they?" enquired Crump, who had crept to my side

unnoticed by me, so that his voice almost startled me.

"Possibly. One never knows. But they are not regular troops, unless they are disguised. What think you?"

I stepped aside as I spoke, for Crump to take a look. Just then I heard the alcalde exclaim—

"On the faith of a good Christian I know nothing of him. If it is the one I mean, he is three or four leagues to the west by this. Good night, gentlemen, good night; and leave a Christian in peace."

The faith of a good Christian! I thought that rather tough of the old pagan.

Then he came, and, seizing me by the arm, said—

"Come, for your lives, *caballeros*, fly!"

"Whom seek they?" I asked.

"I know not. One General Polocino, or some such name. But you are not he. I

do not know who you are. I ask no questions. Go, creep out there, and keep the *jacal* between you; and God be with you!"

He held up some matting which he had unfastened, and there was a hole just large enough for a man to creep through; it opened out into a garden full of hanging vines. Perhaps it was a touch of foolish vanity in me, but while Crump was creeping through the aperture I hazarded the remark—

"You know not General Polocino, you say, but know you not *el Leon de Mejico?*"

The alcalde gave a great start.

"Are they one and the same, Señor Don?"

"Yes."

"And you—*es Usted, el Leon de Mejico?* Is your Grace the Lion of Mexico?"

"So they call me."

"Holy Saints protect me! Run, Señor Don, run. And may heaven make your arm strong, Señor Don! Fly, fly, fly!"

I left the hut and joined Crump, who advised immediate flight into the dense *chapparal*, without making any effort to bring off our horses, which were stabled at the *cura's* in the middle of the village. I objected to this, for I prized La Negrilla very highly, and knew that I stood small chance of getting another mount fit to be compared with her. So I said—

"You make for the stables, and get the horses ready. I am going to reconnoitre this party a little more closely. I will join you soon."

Crump turned away with a muttered oath, and in a few steps he was hidden from sight by the luxuriant growth of the garden; then I crept round towards the front of the hut, taking care to keep well hidden among the flowering bushes. I got near enough to have a good view of the party of horsemen, some of which had dismounted; one or two had

entered the hut. Presently, one of the men strolled a few feet in the direction of where I lay crouched, so that I saw his face distinctly. I recognized him instantly as one of the lieutenants of Matamoras. I waited until he had turned away, and then I came boldly forward. A moment or two later there were loud cries of "*Viva, el General Polocino! Viva, el Leon de Mejico!*" and I found myself surrounded by the horsemen.

The lieutenant of Matamoras handed me a letter from that chieftain, wherein he made me acquainted with the deep chagrin he felt, at the unworthy conduct of his troops in my presence; which I could well believe, for a braver man than the Padre Matamoras never drew sword. He told me further that he had ordered Lieutenant Acheve to be shot, for conduct unworthy of an officer in presence of the enemy: had Acheve been under me, I would have shot him with my

own hand; for a coward officer is worse than a traitor, by which I mean, he is apt to do more damage. In conclusion, Matamoras begged me to accept the twenty men he now sent me. He had summoned them to arms since I left, and knowing every man personally, he pledged his word that they were men true as steel, and such as would follow me to the death. And Matamoras was right. Typical *rancheros*, hardy, fearless, independent, equally expert with musket and lance as with sword and *lazo*, loving their horses as much as their wives, and more at home in the saddle than afoot, ever ready to sing and dance, to smoke and drink, to gamble, to make love, and to fight, half patriots and half bandits, I found them to be brave as lions and faithful as dogs.

Forty-eight hours after I took command of them, owing to recklessness on my part, I was surprised, when alone in a small town,

by a party of royalist cavalry, and made prisoner. The enemy, consisting of thirty-eight troopers and a colonel, lost not a moment of time, but immediately set out for the capital. Nor did they seek in the least to conceal from me their exultation at my capture, and the speedy death that awaited me. By chance my troopers, awaiting my return two-thirds of a league from the town, heard of my capture.

Crump, who was with them, said, "What can we do? They are two to one, and have four leagues of a start. Pursuit is useless." At which words, my troop of *rancheros* looked in each other's eyes in silent wonder.

Suddenly one of them cried, "*Adelante! adelante!* Forward! forward!"

"*Si, si, adelante!*" broke forth from every throat, and digging their spurs, they dashed forward to my rescue, while Crump came following after, exceedingly

mortified. Ah me! I and my friends, the enemy, were in the middle of an extensive *malpaïs*, or thick bed of hard black basaltic lava that stretched itself out to the foot of the distant mountains, when first my *rancheros* hove in sight. On they came at full gallop, in single file, along the narrow winding mule-track that crossed the *malpaïs*. My captors gathered to receive them, while I, securely bound, was sent on a short distance in charge of two troopers.

The surface of the ground was corrugated lava; and a more diabolical place for a charge could scarcely be imagined. But my *rancheros*, nothing daunted, grouped themselves together, and to the cry of "*El Leon de Mejico! El Leon de Mejico!*" came thundering and pounding on. How my blood did tingle at the cry and the onrush! I could not help it—I gave them the battle-shout of God and Liberty in a voice which

carried to them, and set their blood on fire. This I knew from the sharp fierce cry of "*Viva el Leon!*" which broke from them like a clap of thunder.

The next instant came the shock. There were shouts and cries, the breaking of lances, the clashing of swords; horses snorted, screamed, fought each other with their fore-feet, and rolled over dead; royalist transfixed patriot, and patriot transfixed royalist, and thus locked in death, each still holding firm the shaft of his home-sped lance, they swayed to and fro and fell together to the ground; men grappled each other by the waist and wrestled like gladiators, in the saddle; a swaying writhing mass of men and horses. This, for perhaps two minutes, though it might well have been only thirty seconds—I know not. This only I know—it seemed a full hour, and my heart stood still with dreadful hope and fear. Ah, my

God! what is that I see? Out from that struggling agony they come — over horses and men they come—riding down all opposition, blood-covered, striking out a path with clubbed musket, with fierce thrust of lance, with swift-flashing sword! A band of heroes twelve strong; and I see their broad sombreros, silver-corded, and the gleaming of the little silver buttons on their leggings; then I know that victory is ours, bought and paid for. And who can wonder if my cheeks are wet with tears?

Eight or nine days later—to wit, on May the 1st, 1812—at daybreak I was within four leagues of Cuautla Amilpas. I had made good our loss in the skirmish on the *malpaïs*, and by great exertions had raised the number of my men to thirty-two. Questionless, I could have raised three hundred men in the time, had I counted only noses; but I needed men of the same calibre as the sur-

vivors of my little band of *rancheros*—men brave as lions and faithful as dogs. Such men were not to be found in a hurry: the best men at any trade are everywhere scarce.

At nightfall we advanced to within a third of a league of Cuautla. I posted my men under cover of a small wood, and then set out alone to reconnoitre. I made a wide *détour* to avoid the *barranca*, which Morelos had yet to cross, and entered the narrow plain between the *barranca* and Calleja's camp. I was now well within the enemy's lines, and had to exercise extreme caution. Having made out as well as I could the position of the battery, I determined to advance yet nearer to ascertain its strength. To do this, I had recourse to a manœuvre in which I had practised La Negrilla a number of times.

I crept on the off side of the mare and crouched down, with my knee in the broad

stirrup-leather, then I loosed the bridle, and allowed the animal to feed quietly round. In this position I came within forty feet of a sentinel; he made out a horse grazing, nothing else, and so he did not challenge it. Just then the battery opened fire on the town, and I could see a crowd of men about the guns, which were six in number. I was thinking of quietly moving away, when La Negrilla suddenly shook herself, causing my accoutrements to rattle loudly.

"*Quien anda?*" challenged the sentry in a moment, but he got no reply.

A moment or two later the sentinel was joined by the sergeant of the guard, and together they discussed the riderless horse; I could see them pointing and gesticulating. I began to hope that nothing would come of it, but the sentinel suddenly levelled his piece, while the sergeant cried out, "*Quien anda? Quien anda?*"

"*Amigo!*" I called out, as I turned my horse's head sharp round, and giving La Negrilla the word to go, sprang into the saddle. A couple of bullets came whizzing along, one of which imbedded itself in my high silver-lined saddle-back, while the other seemed almost to shave my left ear, and passed clean through the brim of my sombrero. But a miss is as good as a mile, and La Negrilla, giving a snort of contempt, stretched her shapely legs and went like the wind.

When I got back to my men, I sent an Indian forward to try and enter the town, and inform Morelos of our presence. Then I climbed a tall tree, and sat for hours waiting for the signal of the messenger's safe arrival. It came at last—a great tongue of fire that shot up into the darkness, blazed fiercely for some thirty seconds, and then died suddenly away; after that, there was a dull glare in the sky, and volumes of black smoke arose.

Before I left Cuautla, I had arranged with Morelos to light a brisk fire on the tower of the Indian church in the *plaza*, as a signal; and in order to deceive the enemy, some buildings near to the church were to be fired at the same time. I descended the tree, feeling mighty happy: I was near the Padre, and he knew it. I could see the look in his eyes, and the wondrous smile on his face; I could feel the grasp of his hand, and hear him say, in his simple, direct way, "*Muchas gracias, amigo mio.*" Ah me! ah me! very dear wast thou to me, O Morelos, noblest son of Mexico!

Faint streaks of dawn were in the eastern horizon, when we skirted a field of maize within a few hundred yards of the battery. We had already captured a couple of outlying picquets, and from them we learned that within the battery redoubt of earthwork some seventy men were sheltered. Crouched low

in our saddles we rode. Nearer and nearer we rode. Another thirty yards, and our cover would end, and then would come the rush. Suddenly, out of the maize and right in front of us, there sprang three Spanish soldiers. They fired straight at us, killing one of our men, and then rushed with wild cries of alarm towards the battery. Instantly, a dozen *lazos* were circling in the air, and two out of the three runaways came heavily to the ground. We gathered quickly, and charged at full gallop.

The first view the Spaniards got of us, we were not more than a hundred yards off. It was a glorious surprise. We saw them running hither and thither, arming themselves as best they could.

"Morelos! Morelos! *Dios y Libertad!*" rang out from our throats, as we dashed pell-mell at the battery. I put La Negrilla to the jump, and she took the earthwork

like a hunter. As she rose to the leap, a dozen voices cried out among the Spaniards, in notes of warning, not to say fear, "*El Leon de Mejico! El Leon de Mejico!*" And my brave *rancheros*, half-a-dozen of whom rode neck to neck with me, heard the cry, and with one voice took it up, and with a great shout, answered, "*Si, si, el Leon de Mejico!*" So we fell upon them, and for some minutes there was something like silence, broken only by the groans of the dying, and the ringing of steel. We dismounted the whole battery, spiked every cannon; some few of the Spaniards fled and escaped, and the redoubt was full of the dead.

Then we rode back, and quickly too, for the enemy was out in force. We drew rein a full league away, and there were only twelve of us left, and only two men of the twelve were unwounded. Of these, Crump was one.

I had a bayonet-thrust in the left leg, a sabre-cut on my left arm that had touched the bone, and a bullet had broken one of my ribs. They lifted me down from my saddle so gently, the brave fellows, and laid me under a tree beside a sparkling brook. I happened to look up, and saw La Negrilla stagger and fall. She was dead. The gallant creature was full of wounds, and how she had carried me so far, I cannot imagine, save that her courage was invincible. Then I lost consciousness.

CHAPTER XII.

CHILDREN OF THE MIST.

I HAD several lucid intervals of brief duration—so I was told, but I have no memory of them. When I first regained full and lasting consciousness, ten days had elapsed since the attack on the battery. I found myself lying on a rude couch in a small room, that afflicted my enfeebled imagination very sorely for a time. The apartment was dimly lighted, was covered with black cobwebs, and was half filled with curious wooden frames, coloured pictures, and diabolically ugly images, big and little. These things tormented my imagination for days,

until I learned that they were part of the paraphernalia of the public processions of the church. My room, on account of its contents, was, indeed, esteemed the chief room of the house, and had about it something of the odour of sanctity. It certainly had a strange musty smell, and was seldom used, as was witnessed by the cobwebs, which seemed to mingle naturally with the associations of the room.

I was waited on by an old Indian woman of very ancient aspect, who knew no language save her own Indian tongue. This was a relief to me, as the dame was garrulously inclined. Moreover, it left me free to talk English with her, and indeed I could never quite understand the strange, almost irresistible desire I had at this time to speak aloud in my own language. The wrinkled old dame understood not a syllable of my speech, nevertheless she seemed greatly to

enjoy it: it is a slender opinion that it is necessary to understand a language in order to enjoy it. Words are things of sound as well as sense, and I am apt to think that many good honest folk derive as much satisfaction from sound as from sense. And I am not sure but what these are they who make the best use of language.

I asked my Aztec hostess where I was, how long I had been there, how I came there, where my men were, where Crump was, and what had happened at Cuautla, together with many other questions. To all of which she replied with a little chuckle of delight, lifting up her hands, and murmuring, "*Inya, inya, inya!*" What *inya* meant I never understood. One day when I awoke I found Galeaño sitting beside my couch. I could scarcely believe my eyes. But when he said to me, "To-morrow the Padre will be here: he is coming to see you," then, indeed, I did

not at all credit my ears. I closed my eyes and turned over on my side, thinking that my disordered senses were tricking me with illusions. Yet it was not so. It was Galeaño's voice I heard, and he spake truly. On the morrow my eyes were gladdened by seeing once again the Padre. Morelos came to me, and bent down and kissed my brow, murmuring softly, "*Amigo mio, amigo mio!*" And what with his look, and his voice, and his touch, it was more than I could stand, so that my weakness showed itself in a flood of tears. Ah me! had I known it was the last time I should ever see him on earth, my tears had been more plenty, and my grief had killed me!

Morelos was still slightly lame, having fallen from his horse in the retreat from Cuautla; he looked thin and pale, and weary and worn. His intellectual face was chastened, yet his eyes had in them the old light,

and he affected what for him was gaiety of spirits; for he was touched naturally with the spirit of gentle melancholy. He stayed with me a full hour, and then had to leave me quickly, and with much unsaid by both of us, on the report being made to him that a detachment of royalist *lanceros* were in the neighbourhood. But before he left, Morelos gave me an account of the evacuation of Cuautla de Amilpas, and his retreat upon Izucar. I thought at the time, and think now, that this was a remarkable performance, second only to his heroic defence of the town.

I will here set down a brief relation of the event referred to, not as told me by Morelos—that were impossible—but as I now remember it. And I may truly say that, though I was ill and feeble at the time, I did charge my memory faithfully with the narrative of Morelos. If I am thus particular

in my statement, it is for reasons that will hereafter appear.

I shall ever regret that I was not with Morelos in his retreat. Our attack on the battery was, as before said, on the morning of the 1st of May—Mayday in dear Old England. During the whole of the day the enemy showed himself very active, keeping up a continual cannonade. He built a strong redoubt, and mounted another battery to take the place of the one destroyed. The patriots were reduced to the last extremity. But Morelos had arranged all his plans, and was ready to evacuate the place on the coming night. To the fire of the enemy he made a brisk reply—brisker, in fact, than any he made for some time. He called on his famished followers to make a brave show to the end, and they responded with a vigour that surprised both the Padre and themselves.

The firing ceased on both sides a little before midnight. Then the Padre marshalled the few hundreds that remained of his troops in the *plaza*. To Galeaño he gave command of the advanced-guard, to the Bravos the rear, while Morelos himself led the centre. Then the column left the *plaza*, crossed the intrenchments, and marched in the direction of the *barranca*.

To the right lay Calleja, to the left Llano, and each was represented by a battery thrown well forward: Calleja's battery was the newly mounted one. Between these two batteries the retreating patriots had to pass. They moved on silently and swiftly, like a procession of dark shadows. The van had with it a band of Indians carrying hurdles, with which to construct a bridge over the *barranca*. It was a moonless night, but cloudless and starlit. They reached the Spanish lines, they passed between the

two batteries, they marched on like ghosts. So they came to the *barranca*, narrow and steep.

Ten minutes, and the hurdles will be in place. Another ten and they will all be over, and in the open country, with the spurs of the mountains within easy reach. Suddenly, hard by, as from the ground, springs forth a Spanish sentinel. With a bound like a tiger Galeaño is upon him, but not before the sentinel gives a loud cry and fires his musket in the air. Even as he pulls the trigger he falls mortally wounded: he has done his duty, and given the alarm.

Instantly the two camps are all alive, and the bugles ring out on the midnight air. Morelos rides forward, and his words, as he hastens on, re-assure his men, and save them from panic fear. In a few minutes the bridge is made, and the *barranca* crossed. But already the enemy is out, and the forces of

Calleja and Llano are rushing forward from opposite directions, to enclose and overwhelm and annihilate the foe that has held them so long at bay. It is a critical moment, but Morelos is equal to it. Turning to his ragged, wasted, hunger-stricken men, who even now are game, and ready at his word to stand and face a foe they cannot hope to conquer, Morelos says—

"Men, we are in a tight place, and our enemies know it. Meet me at Izucar, and the rallying word is *Morelos*. God be with you! Disperse!"

There is a low suppressed cry of *Viva Morelos!* Then they part, scatter, vanish, like children of the mist. Meanwhile, on come the columns of Calleja and Llano. Soon they see each other in the starlight, and mistake each other for the enemy, and fire upon each other for some time before they discover their mistake. Says Calleja to

Llano—Where is Morelos? Says Llano to Calleja—Where is Morelos? And the stars seem to twinkle in ironic harmony the same question—Where is Morelos? He and his have vanished like Spirits of the Night.

It was some hours before Calleja, fearing some stratagem on the part of Morelos, ventured to enter Cuautla, on whose inhabitants he inflicted such cruelties as were congenial to his nature. In his despatches, Calleja has more than once boasted of "the thousands he had butchered while on their knees imploring his mercy."

In the course of a fortnight, Calleja arrived at the capital, and gave forth a mighty pompous account of the defeat and rout of the "Monster of the South." But the people knew very well that he was romancing, and that Morelos had defied him, held him at bay, and finally outwitted him. In a comedy then running in the city, a soldier was intro-

duced bringing a turban in his hand, which he presented in a vainglorious manner to his general, saying—

"Here is the turban of the Moor, whom I took prisoner."

"And the Moor himself?"

"Unfortunately, sir, he escaped."

And the house rang with laughter at the palpable hit.

In his despatch to Virey Venegas on the retreat of Morelos, Calleja says, "*An extent of seven leagues was covered with the dead bodies of the enemy.*" This was frightful slaughter, if true; and I make little doubt that future writers on these events will accept Calleja's account, in very good faith. Yet Morelos himself told me—and his word then as ever was true—that in two days he was joined at Izucar by all his garrison *except seventeen*, of whom one was Leonardo Bravo, who was taken prisoner and

afterwards shot. If sixteen dead bodies of the enemy did cover, as Calleja says, an extent of seven leagues, truly their bodies must have been of great size. Mayhap Calleja did romance, or mayhap it was a miracle (*era milagro*): sure I am there were only seventeen of all our men missing. Therefore—with Master Edward Haies, who also had his problem—I leave it unto God.

As for Don Leonardo Bravo, he lay in prison in the capital under sentence of death for over a year. In the meantime Calleja succeeded Venegas in the viceroyalty. Don Nicolas, the son of Don Leonardo, gathered together three hundred Spaniards who were held as prisoners, and offered them to Calleja in exchange for his father. Calleja's answer was characteristic: it was an order for the immediate execution of Leonardo Bravo. Now when Don Nicolas heard of his father's death, he immediately set his three hundred

prisoners at liberty, "wishing," as he said, "to put it out of his own power to avenge on them the death of his parent, lest in the first moment of grief the temptation should prove irresistible." This, I have always thought, was a piece of fine magnanimity.

A few hours after Morelos had parted from me for ever—as the event proved—the *cura* of the place came to see me for the first time.

Padre Felipe was a middle-aged man of large stature, with a complexion resembling bronze, dark sparkling eyes, and smooth black hair. His features were very strong, and held not a trace of the bland deceit that not infrequently is to be read in the countenance of Creole and Mestizo. He was an Indian of pure blood, and claimed descent from an illustrious *cazique* who was a friend of Cortes, the conqueror. His manners were simple, direct, manly, yet almost child-like.

Why do I thus delineate him? I know not, save that he was a noble man, and a fine example and proof of the capacity of the native nature for civilization in its best forms. He was a very learned man, and to my great surprise and delight could read English well, though he could not speak it. We became very great friends. For three months I did not once leave my room, and during that time Padre Felipe visited me almost daily, learned to speak English fluently, brought me much comfort, and many little comforts, and—best of all and most to be wondered at—did not once try to convert me, though he knew that I was a sore heretic.

By his orders, my ancient hostess, whom I called Doña Inya much to her amusement, removed from the room all the ghastly pictures, wooden frames, and ugly sacred images. Also, she removed the black cobwebs, and

killed the musty odour of sanctity, by means of fragrant herbs and sweet-smelling flowers. I bade the *cura* tell my hostess that I was a very Aztec in my love of flowers. And from that hour my room became a very bower of floral beauty. One day I told the Padre about the alcalde offering flowers in secret to his idol-god; though I was careful to give him no clue to the identity of the old pagan.

The Padre Felipe smiled, then crossed himself devoutly. Said he—

"I think I have read that in England to this day there are celebrated certain Festivals of Flowers, which derive from a religious belief akin to the Aztec."

This staggered me for a while, until I called to mind the custom of my own dear country, wherein, at Yewdle Brig and other places within reach of Poloc, they do dress the wells every year with flowers. I gave the Padre Felipe an account of several Well-

Dressings I had attended, which seemed to give him much pleasure. Said he—

"My brother *curas* count it a dreadful sin, this secret flower-worship among the natives, and they are horrified when they discover an instance of it. But, then, they are mostly Spaniards, Creoles, and Mestizos. I am an Aztec, pure and simple. I suppose there is something—nay, I believe there is almost everything — in blood. Blood instincts, blood aptitudes, blood prejudices: these lie below, above, and outside of reason and argument, circumstances and intellectual beliefs. I am a true son of Holy Mother Church,"—here he crossed himself thrice,—"but somehow when I come across one of these simple peasant pagans—though Heaven knows they are great sinners—I needs must feign an anger that I do not feel. I see in it the Poetic and the Pathetic writ so large that my blood tingles with sympathy, even while I thunder out the terrors of the Church."

CHAPTER XIII.

SQUARING OLD ACCOUNTS.

A HUMANE man was Padre Felipe, and marvellously free from bigotry. One afternoon he and Doña Inya were having a lively chatter in their Indian dialect, in my room. Several times did the *cura* laugh heartily, and I wondered much what moved him from his habitual gravity. At length he turned to me, and said—

"Señor Don, your hostess wishes me to make an enquiry of you. I tell her it is most improper and impertinent, but she says she is sure you will not be offended. As a bit of rustic belief it might interest you."

I assured him there was no danger of wounding my feelings, seeing that I knew that Doña Inya was the very soul of kindness.

"Then," said he, "Doña Inya would very much like to know if what the neighbours say is true—*that you have a tail?*"

"Whether I have a tail? What on earth does she mean?"

"That is her question, Señor Don. Shall I say, yes?"

"By Jove, no! If you say I have, I'll kill you, Padre Felipe. A tail, indeed! Does she think I am a monkey?"

The Padre laughed, and chatted a moment with Doña Inya.

Then he said to me, "Have any of your countrymen tails?"

"Not to my knowledge," I answered.

There followed another chatter between the two. Then all at once the old dame

clapped her hands with joy, and, trotting to my bedside, seized my hand and kissed it again and again; after which, she posted out of the room and the house, to carry the triumphant news to her incredulous neighbours.

"Now, what does it all mean?" I asked of the *cura*, as soon as she was gone.

"Ignorance, Señor Don, ignorance, with a root of bigotry, I fear. Our country people count all foreigners as Jews. And Jews, it is believed by many of the people, have tails. You are an Englishman, therefore you are a Jew, therefore you have a tail. Can you doubt it? *Mira la prueba!* Behold the proof! Wherefore are the stirrups on your saddle placed more forward, than is the custom among the good Christians who dwell in Mexico? To allow you, of course, to stoop a little, so as to ease the friction of your tail. *Mira la prueba!*"

And the good priest put his hands on his knees, and joined me in a long and loud peal of laughter. I date my convalescence from that laughter. Well do I remember the first time I went out of doors. It was a gloriously fine day towards the end of August. About ten o'clock in the morning came Padre Felipe, accompanied by twelve of the strongest of the villagers, bearing in their midst an old *litera*, or native palanquin. In this I lay at full length on a comfortable mattress, and the men put themselves between the light shafts in front and behind, which were meant for mules, and started off with me at a trot, preceded by Padre Felipe on his mule. They took me through a lovely little valley, and across a raging torrent, and up a steep mountain-slope.

At length they reached a small green plateau, in the middle of which stood a huge splinter of rock which was hollow within,

forming a pretty grotto, wherein was placed a beautiful image of *la bien aventurada Virgen Maria.* They set me down near the entrance to the grotto, and withdrew themselves. In a little while the Padre came out of the grotto, and, seating himself on the *litera* beside me, exclaimed—

"Behold, Señor Don, the land of my forefathers, the beautiful land of Mexico!"

It was in very truth a superb view that met my gaze, and one that was rich in the elements not only of sublimity and terror, but of tenderness and love. He makes but a small show of wisdom who attempts the impossible; by the same token I will not take a degree in folly, by affecting to draw any picture of that inimitable picture. Directly over against me, towered in solemn kinglihood the monarch Popocatepetl; I saw the mountains, like subject princes, lying about his feet; his heavy skirts of pine-

forests; his loins of grim *barrancas* and black volcanic sand; his shoulders of perpetual white; and his mighty head — so far from the tiny ant-like mortals about his feet—that seems to call the morning and the evening sun its brother, and may well know all the sweet influences of the stars. Also, I beheld the snow-covered summits of Iztaccihuatl and Orizaba, beautiful La Malinche, and away to the far east, the Coffre de Perote.

Below me was a wild mountain-torrent, plunging headlong down a narrow rocky channel, losing itself to view in an enormous abyss that delved far down into the earth, and whose sides were clothed with oaks, and dark pines with pendent leaves. Afar were dark-brown patches, not unlike newly ploughed land to the eye; these were lava tracts, hard, metallic, barren, with here and there a low pine, a flowering shrub, yuccas, and small aloes. Between the mountains lay

fertile plains, and little valleys sheltered from every wind that blew, thousands of feet above the sea, yet rioting in tropical splendour. My own village was called Cuatepec, and it lay in a small *barranca* under the spurs of the mountains. I could see it, hundreds of feet below me, looking less like a village than a splendid patch of brilliant colour, made up of fruits and flowers, with a wide border of glossy-leaved corn and amber wheat. For the hollow of Cuatepec was in the *Tierra Caliente*, while its rim was in the *Tierra Templada;* and so it came to pass that the coffee-plant and the camphor-tree grew almost within gunshot of the palm, the banana, and the fig.

I have need to remember Cuatepec, the home of Doña Inya and Padre Felipe. I have seen more remarkable places, and such as were more beautiful for situation; but I have seen no place in and of itself more

lovely. It was a nook wherein perpetual summer reigned, where flowers were always in bloom, and crop followed crop, and the green fruit and the mellow hung ever side by side. The air was ladened with the fragrance of jasmine, honeysuckle, rose, and a myriad flowers of colours and forms beautiful to the eye. There were gorgeous butterflies, and humming-birds that looked like jewels on the wing, and the *clarine*, sweetest of all singing birds, filled the palm-groves with its notes.

There were not more than thirty families in the village, and I came to know well every man, woman, and child of them. My presence among them they guarded as a secret, and though they knew that a price was on my head, not one of them dreamed of betraying me. Indeed, from the day they knew that I was tailless, I believe they would have shed their blood in my defence. Therefore

to me sweet is the memory of Cuatepec; yet sad with a great sadness, O Morelos, my chief, my brother, Morelos!

For some months I saw nothing of Crump, and began to feel a little uneasy lest he had fallen into the hands of the royalists, who would have made no bones about shooting him as a deserter. At length a report was brought to me that a person answering to his description had been making enquiries about me of several of the villagers. This occurred several times; but still he never came to see me, though I sent word for him to do so. It gave me distinct pleasure to find that he was at liberty, and had not forgotten me. The frequency, indeed, with which he began to visit the neighbourhood on my restoration to health setting in, showed a degree of friendship which I felt my secret feelings had not merited. The great caution he also displayed in his fly-

ing visits earned my gratitude. Once he sent me a message from Morelos, bidding me get strong, and to tarry where I was until he sent for me. And so I got strong and well, and was eager to be gone, yet tarried from day to day, waiting for Morelos to summon me.

Towards the end of September an Indian brought to me one evening a letter from Crump. It told me of how Morelos had successively defeated three Spanish divisions, and of his triumphal entrance into Tehuacan—a city of La Puebla, over sixty leagues south of Cuatepec. When the writer left the Padre, Morelos was on the point of marching on the city of Orizaba. Morelos had sent Crump with a small body-guard to escort me to headquarters, whither I was to repair at once. I was to start that very night, and Crump promised to meet me at a certain point at midnight.

Now was I as happy as a king. Nay, Guenilda mine, pout not thy dear sweet mouth at my words: I meant only, as happy as a king could be that had left his love two thousand leagues across the sea. Nay, mock me not with that smile of pretty scornful wit, as much as to say my defence is too feeble, like a pasteboard shield. Dost thou not know, Sweet Heart, that a thoroughly miserable man may be comparatively happy? and that one with an abiding heaviness of heart may yet be full of superficial levity? Yet more. Hast thou forgotten the long letter I penned thee in my little room at Cuatepec, wherein I laid bare my heart, and did try to give a tongue to the deep hunger of my love for thee? Ha! now is thy mouth very terrible, Guenilda mine!—terrible in its beauty, its sweetness, its passionate love. Giddy am I with its terrible

charm, O sweetness incarnate! O love delectable!

I will not linger on the parting with Padre Felipe and Doña Inya, and my faithful friends the Indians of Cuatepec. They were all out of doors and round my residence, when I left the house a little before midnight. I think I shook hands with them all. Some of the women cried, as women will; and the men, somewhat to my astonishment, murmured in low tones, "*Dios y Libertad! Viva el Leon de Mejico!*"

My guide—the old Indian who brought me the letter—led me into the mountains by a way that I knew not, until we came to a rapid stream which we crossed by means of a fallen tree. We halted under a rock near by, and the Indian gave a shrill whistle, which was answered from a little distance, and in a few moments Crump was in front

of me. He shook hands with me heartily, and professed great delight at seeing me again. I dismissed the guide, and followed Crump along a narrow path, to where he said his men were bivouacking.

We found them in a well-sheltered spot under the cover of bold rocks, sitting round a blazing fire, wrapped in their *sarapes*. There were some twenty of them—stalwart and bronzed Creoles, with a military bearing that surprised and pleased me. As we approached they rose and saluted, and cried, "*Dios y Libertad!*" I knew none of them. They moved to and fro, and seemed quite busy saddling up and getting ready to march. I paid little attention to them, but sat on a tree-trunk in front of the fire, in deep conversation with Crump on the successful campaign Morelos was waging in the south. Suddenly, without a note of warning, four or

five of the men seized me, bore me to the ground, and bound me hand and foot with a *lazo*. Of course I struggled hard, but it was of no use. When I had found my breath, I demanded of Crump what it all meant.

"Oh nothing, old fellow, except that I have had enough of your damned nigger lot, and have gone over to the Spaniards; and I thought I could square some old accounts if I could hand you over to them. It will save me the trouble of shooting you, you damned mule-driver!"

I saw through it all then, and I felt sick at heart, seeing the wretched deception to which I had fallen a ready victim.

"Then that explains the shot in the pass that was a 'close shave,' and the broken girth at the ford—eh? *Cobarde! traidor! asesino!* — Coward! traitor! assassin!" I

cried in Spanish, that the men might understand me.

Crump's answer was a rush, and a blow on the head with his pistol which laid me senseless.

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